

OTHER INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

Elizabeth Haub Prize**Environmental Diplomacy: What is New?***

The institution of the Prize is, of course, also a recognition of the efforts undertaken by hundreds and hundreds of colleagues and friends, in the various negotiations, and I feel that I speak also for them in this acceptance address.

I am sure that I also speak for my good friend, Ambassador Razali Ismail, who unfortunately cannot be here with us today. I feel particularly honoured to share the Prize with a person who has played such an outstanding and distinguished role in the Rio process. His contribution, first in leading the negotiations on the institutional chapter in Agenda 21 and then in setting the stage for the CSD through the Chairmanship of its first session was of a decisive nature. In chairing the Special session of the General Assembly in 1997 he also carried the process further into the next Millennium, setting the stage for the new framework of multilateral diplomacy for sustainable development.

So let me go straight into the main theme of my speech to-night. What is new?

What is the rationale behind the concept of environmental diplomacy as a new branch on a tree which is several millenia old, stretching from the dawn of history, when warring tribes needed to talk instead of fight, and sent an emissary to negotiate?

Perhaps the real novelty is that we feel that the species has reached a point when we are dominating the planet in such a total and global way that our generation has a special responsibility towards all future generations. Perhaps we feel, though still vaguely, that for the first time in history all human beings are involved in a struggle for survival, a struggle where we are all ultimately on the same side.

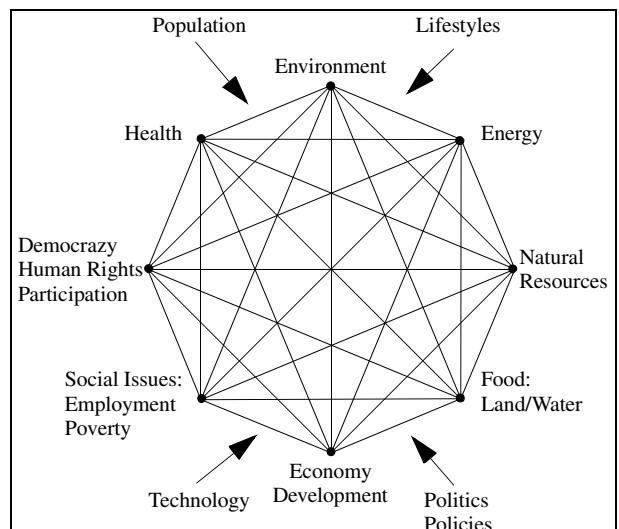
But we also know that realization of such a fundamental shift of emphasis is not universal. We know that many traditional conflicts exist and that they continue to claim the main attention of Governments and media. Progress is slow, political and economic considerations with roots in the past prevail too often – and most recently we have seen how a new brand of traditional dictatorship is suppressing human rights and upsetting peace and stability in Europe.

We also know that the combat of poverty and hunger must continue to be given priority and that hundreds of millions of people struggle for survival, not for the next century but for the next day. Indeed, sustainability has to be economic, social and ecological; and the Rio Conference was a conference on Environment and Development.

* Acceptance address by Ambassador Bo Kjellén, Ministry of the Environment of Sweden, at the conferring of the Elizabeth Haub Prize for Environmental Diplomacy, New York, May 11, 1999.

And yet. We who are the practitioners of multilateral diplomacy at this time feel – indeed know – that something new is happening. And that is why our ceremony this evening and the message it conveys are so important. We need to analyze seriously this new branch of diplomacy, in order to refine it and improve it.

Let me offer a few comments and some suggestions for research priorities. Because I am deeply convinced that we as practitioners need the help of the scientists. C.P. Snow once said that officials need the scientists to help them think in the long term because the administrators – and I include the negotiators – have a tendency to concentrate on short-term problems. He then referred to an old Icelandic saga about a man called Snorre, who “was the wisest man in Iceland, who had not the gift of foresight.”



Elements of Sustainability

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Since environmental diplomacy cannot be separated from the concept of sustainable development, I begin with that notion. The Brundtland Commission gave us the term and the Rio process has permitted us to understand better what it means. The three pillars of sustainability – economic, social and environmental – have existed for a long time, certainly also in multilateral diplomacy. But it is their integration into a common policy framework with global significance that creates a new situation. It goes without saying that when you project this network of linkages on a multilateral negotiating structure, the result will be quite complicated. It takes a considerable effort to cut through a web of influences and cross-currents; in partic-

ular since very real and very strong interests of different kinds are challenged.

This complexity is enhanced by the second major element of change, which is highlighted by the Rio process: the growing role of civil society. Multilateral negotiation is no longer the domain of a small group of insiders. The active participation of the NGO community has changed the atmosphere of multilateral diplomacy. It is true that NGO's are not – and should not be – negotiating parties, in the formal sense. This was clearly recognized in two important decisions taken by the Rio preparatory committee at its first two sessions. But the influence of NGO's is nevertheless felt in many different ways; and looking at the national level, they have a clear impact on the formulation of negotiating positions.

The third point I wanted to underline is the new attention given to the local level. Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 has had a tremendous impact in many countries; in my own country all municipalities have worked out their local Agenda 21.

This will have a profound effect on international negotiations. We need to be aware of the broad popular commitment that exists: it gives us a new responsibility in linking better than before the global concerns with action at the local level where people live and work. In fact, all our efforts, all our decisions and resolutions are meaningless if they do not lead to real action on the ground.

And finally, I have no doubt that the direct impact of science on international negotiations has grown very significantly through the Rio process. The precautionary approach adopted in the Rio Declaration has been instrumental in e.g. the Montreal Protocol or the Climate Convention; but that approach requires sound and credible scientific work and a new understanding of scientific methods and results among the negotiators. And it is not only a question of natural science – the social sciences have a major role to play as well.

Against this general background I wish to express some ideas on areas where further research linked to the process of multilateral environmental negotiations seem to be particularly desirable. Let me begin with the caveat that I am not referring to the necessary scientific backstopping in terms of natural science aimed at identifying new environmental threats of the kind I have just mentioned. I am rather concentrating on the social sciences and on issues more directly linked to the negotiating process itself.

1. General institutional framework. The question of UN institutional reform in the field of sustainable development is very much on the agenda and I do not need to elaborate any details. But it is quite clear that there is need for more research by political scientists on the pros and cons of different solutions; this could help the political process.

2. Relations south-north. We are all aware of the fact that this is a key issue, and that every single Conference confirms that the role of the Group of 77 is of central importance. But we also know that decision-making in this body of more than 130 countries is very difficult and

that an efficient management of the negotiations at the global level is sometimes made very complicated indeed. What can be done to improve the efficiency of negotiations in this respect; and are there methods to increase confidence between the groups and avoid excessive polarization?

3. The legal framework. We are dealing here not only with a new branch of diplomacy, but with new concepts for international law as well. How do we make new international instruments – very often more of a process nature than really action-oriented - enforceable and efficient? No doubt the Pace University and the ICCEL are well placed to play a leading role in this field.

4. Global economic issues. In this particular area, the distance between Washington and New York, between the Bretton Woods institutions and East River, seems very long indeed. I always have a feeling that different perceptions of reality are clashing; and this certainly does not help negotiations on sustainable development. How can we help a much wanted integration of ideas and expertise between these poles? And how do we ultimately involve the actors in the private sector, in particular the big multinational corporations? Their impact on the global economy is often greater than that of many single countries; but they are not involved in any significant way in the intergovernmental effort to tackle global environmental threats.

5. Environmental problems and security concerns. This problematic links classical diplomacy and negotiations for sustainable development. Global threats, such as the greenhouse effect; or regional problems, such as those linked to shared water resources, may carry new seeds of conflict. But they might also open possibilities for co-operation around common problems, thereby opening new avenues for understanding. We all feel the potential importance for the future, but we still have a limited perception of the nature of these new linkages. One particularly dramatic example is provided by the situation around the shrinking Aral Sea in Central Asia, a regional problem which requires the attention of the world.

I have touched upon a number of aspects of multilateral environmental diplomacy which seem to warrant serious intensified academic study. There is much more to be said on this subject, but I simply wanted to carry very briefly the experience of the practitioner to this forum on an occasion which offers so much promise for intensified contacts between diplomacy, science and the corporate sector.

We are all privileged to be a part of the adventure of the Rio process and to have an opportunity of participating in the fascinating effort to create a sustainable future. But the overwhelming sense is modesty and humility in the face of the dimensions of the problems. This is certainly also a reasonable attitude to take in accepting the award granted to me.

Let me now, on the threshold of a new millenium, share with you some personal reflections on the problems we are facing as environmental negotiators.

My point of departure is a world in extraordinary transformation, with new opportunities and new risks, with a totally new world political situation, with incredible technological promises – but with human beings who are not more intelligent or with better judgement than our ancestors 500 years ago or 3000 years ago. How do we manage this extraordinary situation?

The world today seems to be characterized by a number of contradictions, which have to be recognized as we struggle to meet the challenges of the future. Let me just briefly enumerate them:

Globalization itself is perhaps the single most pervasive phenomenon of our time. But it is challenged by increased *regionalization* and stronger attention on *local communities*. In this process, the situation of the nation state is changing.

Affluence is certainly a characteristic of many countries today, and never before have so many people had the opportunity of living a comfortable life. But never before have so many people lived in unacceptable *poverty*.

Projections of population growth have been constantly revised downwards in recent decades. But the dynamics of population are such that we know that the world population by the middle of the next century will *approach 10 billion*. And they all have the right to a decent life.

New attitudes to *gender issues* are changing our societies. But there still remains – and in all countries – traditional *discrimination against women*.

Urbanization creates new ways of life for millions and millions of people. But cities cannot live without the surrounding countryside. *Rural* development must remain a priority issue.

Rapid change – some of us may feel too rapid – which is driven by pervasive new technologies is changing the face of the world. But never before has it been more important to think *in the long term*.

This is the world, the basis for the challenges facing environmental negotiators in the decisive decades to come. What are the central clusters of problems? Any effort of structuring this complicated, interdependent world may of course seem futile, but let me make a try.

I see five main clusters:

Central Problems	Keys for Survival	Human Activities
Atmosphere	Climate	Energy Transport Industry
Oceans	Water	Chemicals
Food Security	Land Soil	Waste Agriculture Fisheries
Urbanization	Biodiversity	Forests

A Global System

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Questions related to the **atmosphere**. This involves a number of problems of different kinds, but perhaps the key issue for human survival is climate and the greenhouse effect. Negotiations are under way, but it is not surprising that they are difficult: mitigation efforts go straight into the heart of our civilization: energy production and transport systems.

Second, the **oceans and the freshwater**. There are global links of many different kinds as we follow the water from the oceans through the rain to the rivers and the ground. There are the fragile coastal zones where most of the world population lives. There are tremendous interests involved as we look at the role of fisheries and other economic activities in these zones. And there are all the risks of pollution, e.g. through chemicals, which will be one of the key issues for negotiation in the years to come.

Third, **food security** for the growing world population. Here the issue of freshwater and the particular problems of the drylands need special attention. The Convention to combat desertification is a start, but it needs to be consolidated. And the Convention on Biodiversity has a central role also in this respect.

I have already mentioned **urbanization** as a characteristic of the epoch. The Habitat Conference in Istanbul in 1996 focused on the multitude of problems arising from the fact that in a few years the majority of people on the planet will live in urban areas. Land use, water and sewage, waste management, control of diseases and crime, all this will be part of the necessary major effort to make all cities livable and manageable.

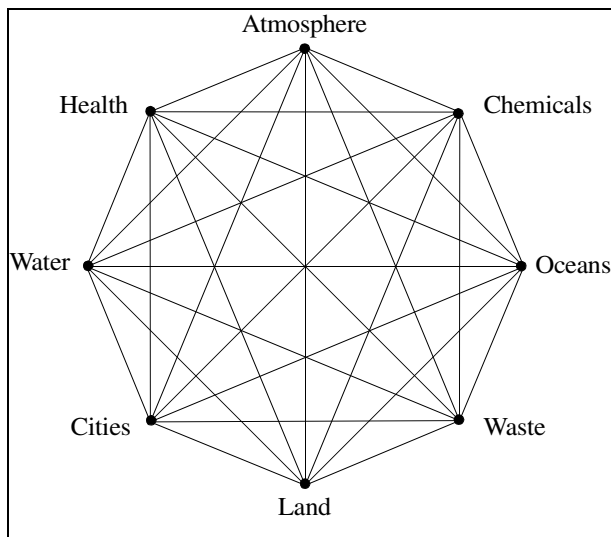
A final cluster of negotiating issues is linked to the **financial flows and to world trade**. No one can be in doubt about the importance of these aspects of globalization which will have a decisive impact on all efforts to create truly global sustainability in economic, social and ecological terms.

These are the tasks that will be facing environmental negotiators in the years to come. They will be part of a major effort to support and control the globalized world economy through a refined multilateral system of cooperation between Governments. They will all continue in that uncertain no man's land between two realities: the negotiator's instructions and the achievable result.

But beyond all the techniques and the theories of negotiation there are also the fundamentals.

It is the decisive importance of education and the need to create among young people a spirit of international understanding. My own experience is an example how this could be done: almost fifty years ago I came to New York for the first time together with 22 other young Europeans for an International Friendship's tour, called Hands Across the Sea, organized by local business people in Nashville, Tennessee. That experience opened totally new perspectives for me, and for many of the others. Without it I would certainly not have the privilege of speaking here to-night. But it is also the feeling of working together on issues which have a bearing on the real long term, on the long chain of future generations. These

are wide horizons, a personal commitment to the people who are yet unborn.



"Diamond of the Environment"

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And there are also the unseen. The concern for the unseen is part of the sense of globalization. Because the unseen are billions of poor people who live on this planet, the women, the men, the children, most of them – but not all – in developing countries. They live far away from the international meeting rooms; and many live far away from the fast-moving modern world. For them, the fundamentals of survival have not changed very much. As negotiators we all have of course constituencies in our capitals: but we also have a common constituency – the unseen.

In the face of these global and long-term perspectives, only one attitude is really possible: to be modest. But it is a modesty that has to be combined with courage and realism. I speak of the courage that the French writer Remain Rolland has expressed better than anyone else: "The real heroism is to see the world as it is, and to love it."

One could look at our situation in different ways. One could try to see it in the light of humour, like the story about the assembly of dinosaurs, when the speaker concludes: "The situation looks fairly bleak, distinguished colleagues: the climate is changing, the mammals are taking over, and we all have brains the size of a walnut."

Or we could accept uncertainty in the style of the Swedish poet Erik Lindegren: "Because we have no other nest than our wings."

Or we could lay emphasis on our responsibility, like the French writer Saint-Exupéry: "We have to know that when we lay down our stone, we are building the world."

Or we could throw wide open the door to new ideas, like Senator William Fulbright: "We must learn to think unthinkable thoughts"; or the poet who wrote: "You

speak of things that are and you ask why?; but I speak of things that never were, and I ask why not?"

In concluding on these notes, it is clear that we have to accept that negotiators can only do so much. They cannot by themselves change policies. But it is obvious to me that as attitudes will have to change in order to achieve "smart growth" and sustainability, then the world will also need some kind of a new humanism. Governments cannot solve all problems; the markets cannot solve all problems. But as human beings we need the capacity to go outside ourselves; hopefully to consume less physical resources and to consume more cultural goods. You cannot force people to change lifestyles, but for us who are among the affluent, we can at least offer us the leisure to feel the music of Bach or Mozart as the bridge between the past, the present and the future; or to reflect on our place in the world as we see the Vermeer paintings in the Frick collection.

Modern science seems to open new avenues of thinking which may establish linkages so far unknown to us. But modern life seems to limit the time we have to reflect and to feel. "Real time" may not always be the best time. For us negotiators, we who are the middlemen between the desirable and the achievable, between the point of departure and the final results, we must have the courage to keep the visions alive. The great American poet Carl Sandburg once wrote:

"The Republic is a dream
Nothing happens unless first a dream".

And whenever I come to New York, I recall the lines that Walt Whitman wrote 150 years ago, upon crossing Brooklyn Ferry:

"Others will enter the gates of the ferry and cross from shore to shore
Others will watch the run of the flood-tide
Others will see the shipping of Manhattan north and west, and the heights of Brooklyn to the south and east,
Others will see the islands large and small,
Fifty years hence, others will see them as they cross, the sun half an hour high,
A hundred years hence or ever so many hundred years hence,
others will see them,
Will enjoy the sunset, the pouring-in of the flood-tide, the falling back to the sea of the ebb-tide...."

And Walt Whitman concludes:
"It avails not, time nor place – distance avails not,
I am with you, you men and women of a generation, or ever so many generations hence..."

The Leaves of Grass of that great New York poet linger in my mind as I humbly accept the Elizabeth Haub Prize for Environmental Diplomacy.

Thank you for your attention. □