

**Declarations of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment  
Stockholm, 16 June 1972**

(Extracts)

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Principle 2

The natural resources of the earth including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management, as appropriate.

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Principle 6

The discharge of toxic substances or of other substances and the release of heat, in such quantities or concentrations as to exceed the capacity of the environment to render them harmless, must be halted in order to ensure that serious or irreversible damage is not inflicted upon ecosystems. The just struggle of the peoples of all countries against pollution should be supported.

Principle 7

States shall take all possible steps to prevent pollution of the seas by substances that are liable to create hazards to human health, to harm living resources and marine life, to damage amenities or to interfere with other legitimate uses of the sea.

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Principle 21

States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

Principle 22

States shall cooperate to develop further the international law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage caused by activities within the jurisdiction or control of such States to areas beyond their jurisdiction.

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Principle 24

International matters concerning the protection and improvement of the environment should be handled in a co-operative spirit by all countries, big or small, on an equal footing. Co-operation through multilateral or bilateral arrangements or other appropriate means is essential to effectively control, prevent, reduce and eliminate adverse environmental effects

resulting from activities conducted in all spheres, in such a way that due account is taken of the sovereignty and interests of all States.

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(b) Action Plan for the Human Environment

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Recommendations for action at the international level

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Environmental aspects of natural resources management

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Recommendation 51

It is recommended that Governments concerned consider the creation of river-basin commissions or other appropriate machinery for co-operation between interested States for water resources common to more than one jurisdiction.

(a) in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, full consideration must be given to the right of permanent sovereignty of each country concerned to develop its own resources;

(b) the following principles should be considered by the States concerned when appropriate:

(i) nations agree that when major water resource activities are contemplated that may have a significant environmental effect on another country, the other country should be notified well in advance of the activity envisaged;

(ii) the basic objective of all water resource use and development activities from the environmental point of view is to ensure the best use of water and to avoid its pollution in each country;

(iii) the net benefits of hydrologic regions common to more than one national jurisdiction are to be shared equitably by the nations affected;

(c) such arrangements, when deemed appropriate by the States concerned, will permit undertaking on a regional basis:

(i) collection, analysis, and exchanges of hydrologic data through some international mechanism agreed upon by the States concerned;

(ii) joint data-collection programmes to serve planning needs;

(iii) assessment of environmental effects of existing water uses;

(iv) joint study of the causes and symptoms of problems related to water resources, taking into account the technical, economic, and social considerations of water quality control;

(v) rational use, including a programme of quality control, of the water resource as an environmental asset;

- (vi) provision for the judicial and administrative protection of water rights and claims;
- (vii) prevention and settlement of disputes with reference to the management and conservation of water resources;
- (viii) financial and technical co-operation of a shared resource.
- (d) regional conferences should be organized to promote the above considerations.

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### Identification and control of pollutants of broad international significance

#### A. Pollution generally

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#### Recommendation 71

It is recommended that Governments use the best practicable means available to minimize the release to the environment of toxic or dangerous substances, especially if they are persistent substances such as heavy metals and organochlorine compounds, until it has been demonstrated that their release will not give rise to unacceptable risks or unless their use is essential to human health or food production, in which case appropriate control measures should be applied.

#### Recommendation 72

It is recommended that in establishing standards for pollutants of international significance, Governments take into account the relevant standards proposed by competent international organizations, and concert with other concerned Governments and the competent international organizations in planning and carrying out control programmes for pollutants distributed beyond the national jurisdiction from which they are released.