

Environmental Impact Assessment

The ECE provides a forum for the elaboration of guidelines and principles on Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). A study on the application of EIA to major projects on civil works, hydroelectric power, flood-control dams, reservoirs, highways, and road networks, has recently been completed. The work in progress covers such topics as criteria for determining environmental significance of projects, hazard analysis in EIA, approaches to post-project analysis, and practical application of EIA related to specific types of activities—particularly oil and gas development and sports and touristic facilities. Increased attention is being paid to the use of EIA in connection with transboundary issues.

Long-term Strategy

Through elaboration and subsequent vigorous implementation of a Long-term Strategy for Environmental Protection and Rational Use of Natural Resources in ECE Member Countries for the Period up to the Year 2000 and Beyond, Governments aspire to achieve, in the early part of

the next century, conditions whereby economic growth and social development are compatible with a sustainable use of the environment. The Strategy will establish a series of achievable medium- and long-term goals to stimulate and guide future ECE work in environmental protection, and to construct a framework for the development of future work programmes within the ECE. The first part of the Strategy has involved the elaboration and publication of a consensus statement on current environmental trends and policies in the ECE region.

The work on the Long-term Strategy reflects the view of Governments that environmental management, including sustainable use of natural resources, is an integral part of economic and social development. It also emphasizes that continuing and emerging environmental management problems, as well as new scientific, technological, and institutional, opportunities, can benefit from closer, more concentrated, cooperative action by ECE member countries.

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Concern for Sustained Ecological Research

More than 60 prominent scientists from 11 nations participated in a Cary Conference in Millbrook, New York, during May 1987, to consider the unique value of long-term, sustained studies in ecology. At the conclusion of the Conference, the participants endorsed the subjoined statement on the need for *Sustained Ecological Research*, which is vital in order to monitor, calibrate, and interpret, ecological data. This type of sustained research activity, however, is relatively rare and falls far short of meeting the need to understand and to manage complex natural ecosystems.

To those who are involved in environmental and public policy issues, I wish to send this preview of the statement and to invite their comments. A book will be forthcoming from the Conference, detailing the value of long-term studies in science as well as describing various alternatives that can supplement the knowledge gained from ecological research which is sustained over long periods of time of at least several years. The subjoined statement will appear as the frontispiece for this important book emanating from the Cary Conference.

A critical component of this statement is a call for a new partnership between research scientists and resource managers. Goals of such a partnership include the presentation of scientific information and concepts in a form that can be understood and used, and integration by users of this scientific information with societal, economic, and political, considerations in a responsible way.

The participants of our Conference concluded that each nation has major informational needs relative to the management of natural resources, and that sustained ecological research can provide unique understanding for the development of sound management policies. Thus, conferees agreed that the requirement of sustained ecological research for this partnership represents a critical need in nations throughout the world.

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Sustained Ecological Research: A Critical Need†

Ecological understanding is required to develop environmental policies and to manage resources for the benefit of Humankind. Sustained ecological research is one of the essential approaches for developing this understanding, and for predicting the effects of human activities on ecological processes. Sustained research is especially important for understanding ecological processes that vary over long periods of time. However, to fulfill its promise, sustained ecological research requires a new commitment on the part of both management agencies and research institutions. This new commitment should include longer funding-cycles, new sources of funding, and increased emphasis and support from academic and research institutions.

Because they have common long-term goals, we propose a new partnership between scientists and resource managers. Elements of this partnership include:

- (1) Agreement by scientists to answer the questions put to them by managers, while making clear the level of uncertainty that exists and what additional research needs to be done.
- (2) Agreement by managers to give serious consideration to these answers and to support the continuing research towards better answers.

Sustained Ecological Research supported by this new partnership can contribute significantly to the resolution of critical environmental problems.

† Statement adopted at the Cary Conference in Millbrook, New York, on 13 May 1987; Revised 4 July 1987.

There follows an account of the Institute of Ecosystem Studies which is headed by Dr Likens and warmly welcomed as an encouraging development of a much-needed nature.—Ed.