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Ismail Serageldin - Commission on Sustainable Development

COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Statement By

Mr. Ismail Serageldin
Vice President
Environmentally Sustainable Development
World Bank

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates

It is a great pleasure to be with you at this important first meeting of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

I would like to talk briefly about how the World Bank has been actively seeking to put the Rio agenda into practice and how we plan to move forward with you.

An important element to our follow-up to Rio has of course been the IDA-10 Replenishment. As you may know, governments agreed to a replenishment of SDR13 billion (roughly equal to \$ 18 billion). In real terms this is broadly the same resources as for IDA 9. Donors were not able to provide an additional "Earth Increment" -- but gave strong emphasis to the need to integrate environmental concerns into all of the Bank's activities. Let me turn to how we are doing this.

The World Bank's fourfold Agenda

The World Bank's contribution to our member countries efforts to protect and enhance the environment while accelerating development has four components:

First, we are actively assisting member countries as they seek to strengthen their environmental institutions, policies and investments. In the twelve months since Rio, the World Bank has committed \$2.2 billion in new loans and credits to around 20 countries explicitly for environmental concerns. (This is apart from our involvement in the GEF).

This is a dramatic increase over previous years. Our environmental lending this year is 30 times higher than it was five years ago. Today we are supporting

supply and sanitation has been increased. And as chair of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research, we have worked to recast the research agendas of member institutions to give greater emphasis to issues of sustainability.

The fourth element of our action plan for sustainable development concerns our work on global environmental challenges. Our partnership in the GEF is central to our efforts here and we are actively embedding this work in our overall country assistance strategies. Since my colleague, Mohamed El-Ashry, reviewed the GEF on Wednesday, I will not go into further details here.

Equipping ourselves for the Task

This fourfold agenda is not only that of the Bank, of course. It is the agenda of most of us here. It is a big agenda and we need to equip ourselves for the task. Let me suggest three ways in which this equipping is taking place in the Bank.

First, internally, we are aggressively building up a skills base to make us equal to the task. We are actively recruiting technical specialists in the fields of ecology, biology, environmental engineering and sociology. Twenty years ago, we had one environmental specialist at the World Bank. Today we have 150, and the number will rise as we endeavor to meet the rapidly growing requests from our member countries.

Equally important, we have embarked upon a major staff training program. Such training is designed to impart technical skills -- but it is also designed to help staff and managers "think differently".

As part of this "different thinking" -- and as part of our follow-up to Rio -- we have created a new Vice Presidency for Environmentally Sustainable Development in which we have brought together the work of the Environment, Agriculture, and Infrastructure and Urban Departments to encourage a more integrated and multidisciplinary approach -- and I have the privilege of serving as the first Vice President of ESD.

A second way that we are equipping ourselves for the task is to build partnerships with those who bring complementary skills, perspectives and experiences. Addressing the challenge of sustainable development requires an interdisciplinary approach and a stronger emphasis on participation.

- fisheries policy in Chile or New Zealand;
- environmental indicators in Canada or Australia;
- energy policy in the EC or Japan;
- agroecological zoning in the Brazilian Amazon or in the Philippines;
- water policy in Morocco or France;
- the use of market based instruments in Thailand or Holland;
- environmental adjustments to the national accounts in the Nordic countries.

.. . and so on.

The precise modality is of course less important than the principle. We need to establish a process of structured learning so that we can build upon emerging positive experiences and rethink negative ones.

As a part of this learning process the World Bank is holding its first Annual Conference on Environmentally Sustainable Development on Sept. 30 - Oct. 1, 1993. Its theme will be Valuing the Natural World, and it will focus on water policy and environmental accounting. This is scheduled to occur immediately following the World Bank/IMF Annual Meetings so that delegates may participate. May I extend a warm invitation to all of you to attend? I also hope that many of you will be able to attend the International Hunger Conference to be held at the World Bank in November 1993.

Mr. Chairman, let me assure you that the World Bank stands ready to be an active and constructive partner in the implementation of Agenda 21.

Thank you.