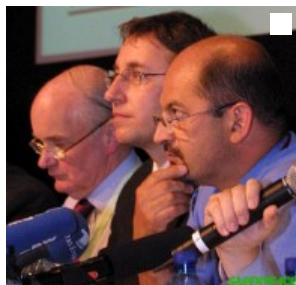


Traditional adversaries call for action on climate change

Feature story - 28 August, 2002

Greenpeace and industry coalition World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) were 'fighting like cats and dogs' ten years ago in Rio, in the words of Greenpeace Political Director Remi Parmentier. Today, they agreed to put aside their differences to join in sending one historic signal: business and the environmental community are united in demanding governments adopt a global framework on climate change.



Left: Charles C. Nicholson, Group Senior Advisor, BP. Middle: Achim Steiner, Director-general of the IUCN. Right: Remi Parmentier, Political Director, Greenpeace International.

Environmentalists want it for the planet. Business wants a level playing field that avoids the confusion of differing national implementations. And both want governments to do something so badly that oil giant BP and Greenpeace were able to share a platform to demand it.

"Sharing platforms of course is something we do literally and figuratively" said Group Senior Advisor for BP Charles C. Nicholson, referring to Greenpeace's 1997 occupation of the Stenna Dee oil platform in the North Sea. Greenpeace Climate Policy Director Steve Sawyer responded that he was also pleased to share a different kind of platform, and he promised that unlike BP, "I won't call the police, or take out a civil suit, or try to freeze your bank accounts."

Both Greenpeace and the WBCSD emphasized that they are not prepared to set aside all of their differences. "This is not a merger" said Bjorn Stigson, the President of the WBCSD. And Nicholson noted that "Of course there will continue to be differences about the end points and the means, but if we keep sprinting around those differences we're never going to make any progress."

Chris Boyd, the Senior Vice President for Environment and Public Affairs at LaFarge, said that his company and those who saw themselves as proactive on climate change were particularly concerned that governments take action. "We have to ask ourselves, if there is no progress on a global framework, who will suffer most? It will be the proactive companies."

Greenpeace is well known for its campaigns against some companies who are members of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD). In turn, the WBCSD is well known for advocating a free trade approach to solving environmental problems, including voluntary measures that often differ radically from Greenpeace.

The Bush administration in particular has claimed their refusal to adopt Kyoto rests on the concerns of industry, and claim that the standards demanded by activists will never be accepted by businesses.

In their joint statement, the two adversaries said that "We both share the view that the mixed often contradictory signals sent by governments on the environment, especially on greenhouse gas emission reductions, is creating a political environment which is not good for business nor, indeed, for the future of humanity."

The standing-room only crowd at the press conference broke into applause. "We are shelving our differences on other issues on this occasion and calling upon governments to be responsible and build the international framework to tackle climate change on the basis of the UN Framework Convention on Climate change and its Kyoto protocol. We both agree this is the essential first step," said Stigson and Parmentier.

Dr. Jose Goldemberg, Secretary of State for the Environment in the state of Sao Paulo, Brazil, commented on new resistance that had surfaced at the Earth Summit to clear timetables and targets for renewable energy. "If you don't adopt targets and timetables, you don't signal governments. And if you don't send a signal, governments won't act and business won't act." Goldemberg also noted the importance of the Summit in particular being clear about this: "Renewables make the link between poverty and the environment."

Sawyer agreed, stating "this [the Summit] is a blunt instrument. We don't expect heads of state to unpick all the issues, but they do need to send a signal that they intend to fulfil the commitments they made ten years ago in Rio."

Remi Parmentier noted that "We will continue to have disagreements with many of the companies who are members of the WBCSD. We will continue to have campaigns against them and put activists on their chimneys and pipes. They will continue to call the police when we get too close. But as an advocacy group, we can find common ground."