

THE SWANSEA DECLARATION

(released at the conclusion of the Association of Commonwealth Universities' Fifteenth Quinquennial Conference, August 1993, Swansea, Wales).

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Human demands upon the planet are now of a volume and kind that threaten the future well being of all living species. Universities have a major responsibility to help societies shape their present and future development policies and actions into the sustainable and equitable forms necessary for an environmentally secure and civilized world.

As the international community marshals its endeavours for a sustainable future, following upon the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and its adoption of Agenda 21, the United Nations' Programme of Action aimed at reconciling the twin requirements of a high quality environment and a healthy economy for all peoples of the world, universities in all countries are increasingly examining their own roles and responsibilities. At Talloires, France in October 1990, a conference of university presidents from every continent, held under the auspices of Tufts University of the United States, issued a declaration of environmental commitment that has attracted the support of more than 100 universities from dozens of countries. At Halifax*, Canada in December 1991, the specific challenge of environmentally sustainable development was addressed by the presidents of universities from Brazil, Canada, Indonesia, Zimbabwe and elsewhere, as well as by the senior representatives of the International Association of Universities, the United Nations University and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada.

At Swansea, Wales, in August 1993, participants in the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU) 15th Quinquennial Congress drawn from over 400 universities in 47 different countries met to address the challenge of "People and the Environment - Preserving the Balance". They engaged in a quest for the ways by which the universities of the ACU, their leaders, scholars and students might engage and deploy their unique common traditions and comity to respond appropriately to this challenge.

The Swansea meeting inspired by the examples of Talloires and Halifax, and disappointed by the insufficient University presence at Rio de Janeiro and in Agenda 21, added its voice to those many others worldwide that are deeply concerned about the widespread degradation of the Earth's environment, about the pervasive influence of poverty on the process and the urgent need for sustainable practices. The participants expressed the belief that solutions to these problems can only be effective to the extent that the mutual vulnerability of all societies, developed and developing, is recognized, and the energies and skills of people everywhere be employed in a positive, co-operative fashion. Because the educational, research and public service roles of universities enable and impel them to be competent, effective contributors to the major additudinal and policy changes necessary for a sustainable future, the Swansea meeting invited thoughtful consideration by all universities of the following actions:

1. To urge universities of the ACU to seek, establish and disseminate a clearer understanding of sustainable development - "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations" - and

- encourage more appropriate sustainable development principles and practices at the local, national and global levels, in ways consistent with their missions.
2. To utilise resources of the university to encourage a better understanding on the part of governments and the public at large of the inter-related physical, biological and social dangers facing the planet Earth, and to recognize the significant interdependence and international dimensions of sustainable development.
 3. To emphasize the ethical obligation of the present generation to overcome those practices of resource utilization and those widespread circumstances of intolerable human disparity which lie at the root of environmental unsustainability.
 4. To enhance the capacity of the university to teach and undertake research in sustainable development principles, to increase environmental literacy, and to enhance the understanding of environmental ethics within the university and with the public at large.
 5. To co-operate with one another and with all segments of society in the pursuit of practical and policy measures to achieve sustainable development and thereby safeguard the interests of future generations.
 6. To encourage universities to review their own operations to reflect best sustainable development practices.
 7. To request the ACU Council urgently to consider and implement the ways and means to give life to this declaration in the mission of each of its members and through the common enterprise of the ACU.

Done at the University of Wales, Swansea, the 20th day of August 1993

* The declaration adopts, quite substantially, the language of the Halifax Declaration, which was written by Ivan Head and Walter Kamba in consultation with Halifax conference participants.