

# Background to Sustainability

## Global Events and Organisations That Have Shaped Current Approaches to Sustainability

### **World Conservation Strategy – Living Resource Conservation for Sustainable Development 1980**

The 1980s was landmarked by the collaboration between the World Wildlife Fund (WWF), the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) as well as Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in producing a joint World Conservation Strategy. The strategy was endorsed by the United Nations Secretary General and launched simultaneously in 34 world capitals. The strategy recommended a holistic approach to conservation and highlighted the importance of using natural resources sustainably. Since the launch, 50 countries have formulated and initiated their own national conservation strategies, based on its recommendations. A simplified version, *How to Save the World*, was subsequently published in several languages.

### **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – Rio Earth Summit 1992**

The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro was unprecedented for a UN conference, in terms of both its size and the scope of its concerns. Twenty years after the first global environment conference, the UN sought to encourage Governments to rethink economic development and find ways to halt the destruction of irreplaceable natural resources and the ongoing pollution of the planet. Hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life were drawn into the Rio process. They persuaded their leaders to go to Rio and join other nations in making the difficult decisions needed to ensure a healthy planet for generations to come.

The Summit's message – that nothing less than a transformation of our attitudes and behaviour would bring about the necessary changes – was transmitted around the world by almost 10,000 on-site journalists and heard by millions around the world. The message reflected the complexity of the problems facing us: that poverty as well as excessive consumption by affluent populations was placing damaging stress on the environment. Governments recognized the need to redirect international and national plans and policies to ensure that all economic decisions fully took into account any environmental impact.

Importantly arising out of this Rio Summit was a call for all nations to develop and implement Agenda 21 i.e. the development of National Strategies for

Sustainable Development (NSSD). It was hoped that getting this onto the 'agendas' of all countries and organisations would change the trend in loss of environmental resources and begin to reverse this at both global and national levels by 2015.

<http://www.nssd.net/references/KeyDocs/IIEDa24.htm>

[http://www.nssd.net/res\\_book.html](http://www.nssd.net/res_book.html)

<http://www.un.org/geninfo/bp/enviro.html>

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines "Shaping the 21st Century" (1996), set a target of 2005 for NSSDs to have commenced being implemented. In 1997, the UN General Assembly Special Session set a reduced target date of 2002 for all countries to have introduced such strategies. Shaping the 21st Century commits OECD member countries to support developing countries in the formulation and implementation of NSSDs through partnerships.

[http://www.oecd.org/document/10/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_33721\\_1916746\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/10/0,3343,en_2649_33721_1916746_1_1_1_1,00.html)

### **International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources or World Conservation Union (IUCN)**

The World Conservation Union is the world's largest and most important conservation network.

The Union brings together 83 States, 110 government agencies, more than 800 non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and some 10,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership.

The Union's mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

The World Conservation Union is a multicultural, multilingual organization with 1100 staff located in 40 countries. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland.

Use of the name "World Conservation Union" began in 1990, but the full name and the acronym are often used together as many people still know the Union as IUCN.

<http://www.iucn.org/en/about/>

### **United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)**

Vision – To provide leadership and encourage partnership in caring for the environment by inspiring, informing, and enabling nations and peoples to improve their quality of life without compromising that of future generations.

<http://www.unep.org/>

## Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO)

FAO leads international efforts to defeat hunger. Serving both developed and developing countries, FAO acts as a neutral forum where all nations meet as equals to negotiate agreements and debate policy. FAO is also a valuable source of knowledge, expertise and information. FAO helps developing countries and countries in transition to modernise and improve agriculture, forestry and fisheries practices and ensure good nutrition for all. Poverty and starvation are factors that prevent sustainability being a consideration.

<http://www.fao.org/>

<http://www.fao.org/fishery/>

## World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)

WWF came into existence in 1961 as a result of the deep concern held by a few eminent individuals who were worried by what they saw happening in our world at that time.

Since those early days WWF has grown from a small group that focused on a few specific projects to be (since the 1980s) one of the largest environmental organizations in the world.

WWFs major tenet is to stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature, by:

- conserving the world's biological diversity;
- ensuring that the use of renewable natural resources is sustainable; and
- promoting the reduction of pollution and wasteful consumption.

Today WWF has refocused its main objectives to:

- slowing climate change;
- reducing the release of toxins into the environment;
- protecting our oceans and fresh waters;
- stopping deforestation; and
- save species.

“Our great achievement over the past 40 years is spreading the message – through us people know that nature counts.”

[http://www.panda.org/about\\_wwf/who\\_we\\_are/history/timeline/index.cfm](http://www.panda.org/about_wwf/who_we_are/history/timeline/index.cfm)

## Marine Stewardship Council

The Marine Stewardship Council is an independent, global not for profit organisation that was established in 1997 by WWF along with Unilever (the world's largest buyer of seafood), to help address the global problem of overfishing. To achieve this, the MSC has focussed on harnessing green consumer purchasing power, i.e. people preferring to buy seafood that has been harvested or caught in an environmentally responsible way.

The MSC, along with scientists, fisheries experts and conservation groups, has developed an environmental standard to evaluate fisheries. Fisheries undergo the independent MSC assessments and meet these standards are then certified and able to display the MSC eco-label, distinguishing these fisheries as those managed in a highly sustainable manner. Thus, consumers who are concerned about environmental sustainability can preferentially select seafood products that bear the MSC label, rewarding those fisheries that have worked hard to achieve such high environmental standards.

There are over 1400 seafood products bearing the MSC eco label, which are sold in 34 countries worldwide (in Australia, there are over 30 seafood products).



Marine Stewardship Council eco-label [www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)

Australia has 2 fisheries which are certified i.e. Mackerel Icefish and Western Australian Rock Lobster and 2 which are currently undergoing assessment for certification i.e. the Cockle Fishery and the mixed fishery (Mulloway, Cockle, Perch, Mullet) from the Lakes and Coorong, S.A.

For further information see [www.msc.org](http://www.msc.org)