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DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC CO-OPERATION: LONG-TERM
STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE AND ENVIRONMENTALLY SOUND DEVELOPMENT

Letter dated 19 October 1988 from the Permanent Representative
of Czechoslovakia to the United Nations addressed to the
Secretary-General

I have the honour to forward herewith a copy of document E/1988/105, entitled "Letter dated 13 July 1988 from the Permanent Representative of Czechoslovakia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Economic and Social Council".

I would be most grateful to you if you could have the text of the above-mentioned document circulated as an official document of the forty-third session of the General Assembly under agenda item 82 (g).

(Signed) Evzen ZAPOTOCKY
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION ON THE ENVIRONMENT

Letter dated 13 July 1988 from the Permanent Representative of
Czechoslovakia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed
to the President of the Economic and Social Council

Referring to the statement made by the representative of Czechoslovakia in the First Committee of the Economic and Social Council on 12 July 1988 concerning item 11 of the agenda, I have the honour to submit to you the text of an aide-mémoire which reflects the views of the socialist countries of Eastern Europe on the concept of international ecological security and further steps to intensify international co-operation in the field of the environment.

On this occasion, I should like to request that this document be circulated as an official document of the Economic and Social Council.

(Signed) Miloš VEJVODA
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Appendix

AIDE-MEMOIRE

CONCEPT OF INTERNATIONAL ECOLOGICAL SECURITY AND FURTHER
STEPS TO INTENSIFY INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION IN THE
FIELD OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Under the present conditions, the category of global problems includes, besides the issue of safeguarding international peace, also environmental problems whose solution is of paramount importance for the survival of mankind and the preservation of world civilization. Gradual disruption of the environment, which has been acquiring over the past few decades ever more threatening dimensions, differs from a nuclear disaster only in bringing about a gradual destruction of the foundations of human existence rather than destroying them by one stroke.

The environmental factors causing deterioration of the quality of the environment and degradation of natural resources are giving rise to international tension, becoming a serious obstacle blocking the path of sustainable socio-economic development of nations and thus posing a threat to their security. This conclusion has been made by the World Commission on Environment and Development which pointed out in its report entitled "Our Common Future" that the whole notion of security as traditionally understood - in terms of political and military threats to national sovereignty - must be expanded to include the growing impacts of environmental stress - locally, nationally, regionally and globally. Moreover, the environmental aspects in international relations offer the possibility of eliminating certain obstacles which have hindered international economic co-operation and of creating appropriate conditions for development of such co-operation on a new basis.

In a situation when deterioration of the conditions of the environment has an immediate and substantial effect on the vital interests of virtually all inhabitants of this planet, there is a growing need to combine the efforts of the international community with a view to working out a concept and subsequently building up a reliable system of international ecological security as a means of joint solution of environmental problems on a more effective and constructive basis than before. It is a telling fact that numerous international documents approved lately within the United Nations, specifically "Environmental Perspective to the Year 2000 and Beyond", "Our Common Future", "Disarmament, Environment and Sustainable Development", "Global Resources and International Conflict: Environmental Factors in Strategic Policy and Action", "UN System-wide Medium-term Environment Programme for the Period 1990-1995", refer, in a greater or lesser measure, to the concept of international ecological security.

The "UN System-wide Medium-term Environment Programme for the Period 1990-1995", approved at a special session of the United Nations Environment Programme says that one of the primary objectives is to build up the conceptual basis for a co-ordinated solution of the task of preserving the environment by all the relevant components of the United Nations system with a view to promoting ecological security.

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In February 1988 an ad hoc expert group meeting on the expanded concept of international security took place within UNEP. The conclusions drawn by the participants in that meeting - representatives of many countries of the world - included recognition of the need to embody ideas of the concept of ecological security in all UNEP programmes, especially in the programme of ecological education.

Of considerable importance is, in our view, UNEP research under the project entitled "Studies in Environmental Security" (project No. FP/8101-88-01/PP2821). (Works under this project are co-ordinated mainly by the International Peace Research Institute in Oslo (PRIO).)

The objective need for further elaboration of the concept of international ecological security emerges as a result of comprehension of the fact that the complex problems relating to preservation of the environment today cannot be resolved through isolated actions of individual States or groups of States but only through constructive co-operation and mutual assistance among all countries. Our concept, based on analyses of the positive experience of the international community, envisages international ecological security as a corollary to such a state of affairs in international relations within which a system of norm-setting, organizational and material measures adopted within the framework of broad co-operation on the basis of international law will safeguard preservation of the environment and improvement of its quality with a view to creating appropriate conditions for a life worthy of human beings and securing sustainable and safe development of all States. Therefore, it is necessary to create such a model of international co-operation in the ecological field that would minimize the negative effects of environmental factors and contribute to making the environment and its quality a significant factor exerting a positive influence on all the other spheres of international life.

Elaboration of the concept of international ecological security requires comprehensive consideration of a system of measures that are of fundamental importance for the safeguarding of ecologically safe development for every member of the international community which may include particularly the following steps:

Increase in cognizance of environmental problems in their quality as political and global issues and enhancement of the role of the ecological aspects in the process of decision-making by Governments of individual countries; in the sphere of domestic and foreign policy of countries - application of the ideas of preservation of the environment, improvement of its quality and the more rational use of natural resources at local, national, regional and global levels;

Support for strategy of anticipatory and preventive policies as the most effective and economical way of achieving environmentally sound development (General Assembly resolution 42/186, item 3f);

Consistent compliance with both existing and future international agreements aimed at resolving problems in the field of the environment through adoption of effective measures at the national level;

Unification of national legislation in the field of the environment through adoption of corresponding international agreements;

Elaboration and adoption of guidelines for international co-operation and conduct of States whose consistent application would prevent deterioration of the environment and violation of balance of interests of various countries in the field of the environment; they might be based on the principles enshrined in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development and adopted at the "Stockholm II" conference in 1992 in the form of a Universal Declaration or Convention on Environmental Protection;

Annual reporting by Governments on their activity in the field of environmental protection and notification on ecological accidents, including those prevented;

All-round enhancement of the role of the United Nations in general and UNEP in particular in the activities of the international community in the fields of prevention, prediction and joint action in the direction of dealing with environmental problems and possible disasters and in the field of rational use of natural resources; for the sake of the above, we deem it necessary to implement as soon as possible the recommendations of the World Commission on strengthening the Earthwatch programme, the Global Environment Monitoring System and the Global Resource Information Database and establishing a Global Risks Assessment Programme;

Intensification of international economic and ecological co-operation, including co-operation in exchange of technology, for the purpose of protecting the environment; attention should be given in this area also to the specific situation of developing countries.

In view of the fact that the Earth is the only natural system constituting an environment for human activity and the safeguarding of human life and, along with that, a sphere of peaceful coexistence and friendly co-operation among sovereign States, all States without exception and also the concerned international bodies and organizations could and should join in developing the concept and the ensuing system of international ecological security to be built up on the basis of full equality of rights. It should be emphasized that the concept of international ecological security is not meant to be an alternative to those conclusions and approaches that have been already adopted through efforts by States, organs of international organizations and commissions.

A concept of international ecological security, to be worked out in the process of productive and constructive international dialogue on the basis of the positive experience accumulated in the world in the field of the environment, might play the role of a significant tool in implementation of the strategy of ecologically sound development, be effectively instrumental in organizing efforts of the world community for purposeful, planned implementation of concrete measures, especially one of such magnitude as the preparation of the "Stockholm II" conference for 1992.

The submitted material is to add an impetus to the continuation of the dialogue on international ecological security which was initiated at the forty-second session of the United Nations General Assembly.
