Panelists Agree International Effort Needed for Environment

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Although the panel agreed that there is clearly a need for international organization concerning the environment, Price F. Strong, chairman and of Ontario Hydro of Quebec, asserted that a "world government" is "neither necessary nor desirable." Instead, he looked to international agreements such as those formed at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro as the road to environmental control.

The internationally-known explorer and outspoken environmental advocate Jacques-Yves Cousteau looked to the United Nations to provide a coordinated, international environmental protection force, as well as to "Geneva, '" the secretariat to re-act to environmental stresses worldwide. Cousteau, who is also a member of the U.N. High-Level Advisory Board for sustainable development, noted that there has already been some discussion of such a force in UNESCO and among member nation governments.

Fostering development

The practical questions of how to safeguard the environment while fostering sustainable development and of how to deal with current environmental problems drew a wide range of comment, not all of it positive.

While Strong said he viewed the results of the Rio conference as the basis of a major shift in global environmental awareness, he added that he "has no real hope" and "is not promising." While he congratulated the participants of the Rio conference on their success, he questioned "their degree of commitment" for future.

Strong also expressed his extreme concerns about "the plundered wilderness" between the countries of the North and those of the South. The panelists agreed that global sustainable development and environmental protection will be impossible without the economic growth of developing countries.

Worldwide progress cannot be made while countries such as Mexico and Brazil cannot afford to curb pollution and deforestation that in turn affect the rest of the world. The developed world is not ready to invest in the growth of developing countries, Strong said.

"Culture of Poverty"

"We've slowly evolved from a human group that was a victim of nature to a master of nature," said Provost Mark S. Wrighton, who co-chaired the meeting.

"Our rejection of the rules of the jungle is a product of our minds, not our genes," concluded Cousteau. "This is the first generation of our evolution, "he said. "Of that I have no doubt."