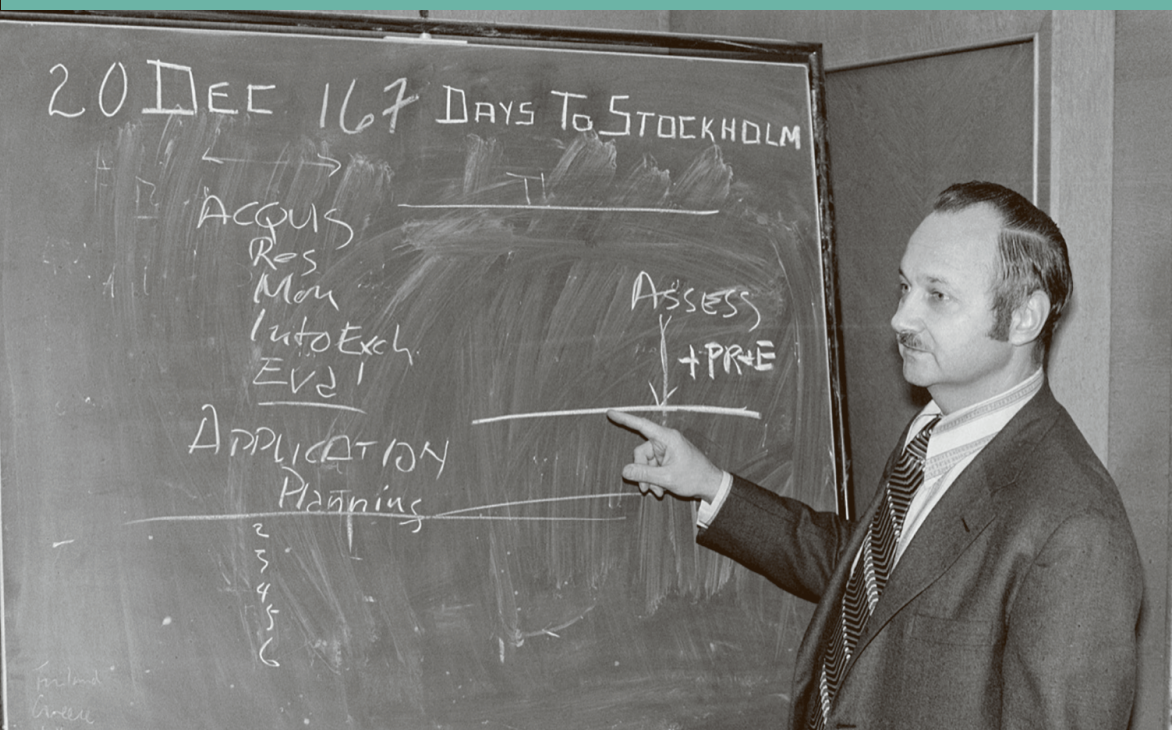


Legacy for the future and future generations

# Remembering Maurice F. Strong

Tributes and Reminiscences



Editeurs

Federico Mayor / Negoslav Ostojić / Roberto Savio



EUROPEAN CENTER FOR PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT  
UNIVERSITY FOR PEACE EST. BY THE UNITED NATIONS



Legacy for the future and future generations

# Remembering Maurice F. Strong

Tributes and Reminiscences



Legacy for the future and future generations

# Remembering Maurice F. Strong

Tributes and Reminiscences

Editors

Federico Mayor/Negoslav Ostojić/Roberto Savio

*Editors:* **Federico Mayor, Negoslav Ostojić, Roberto Savio**

*Publisher:* **European Center for Peace and Development (ECPD)**

Terazije 41, 11000 Beograd • [www.ecpd.org.net](http://www.ecpd.org.net)

Tel: (+381 11) 3246-041, 3246-042

e-mail: [ecpd@EUnet.rs](mailto:ecpd@EUnet.rs) / [office@ecpd](mailto:office@ecpd).

The basic premise of the ECPD, which was established in 1983 is that "development under conditions of peace is only possible when conceived as human development."

*For the Publisher:* Negoslav Ostojić, ECPD Executive Director

*English-language editing:* Bradley Knopff

*Design:* Nataša Ostojić-Ilić

ISBN 978-86-7236-109-4

Printed by: **graficom**uno

Belgrade, 2018.



## **SUN<sup>X</sup> – STRONG UNIVERSAL NETWORK**

The publishers appreciate the financial contribution of Professor Geoffrey Lipman, and the **SUN<sup>X</sup> Program**, to support this book and help honour our friend, colleague and mentor, the late Maurice Strong

CIP – Каталогизacija у публикацији -

Народна библиотека Србије, Београд

33:929 Стронг М.(082)

REMEMBERING Maurice F. Strong :Legacy for the Future and Future Generations : tributes and reminiscences / [editors Federico Mayor, Negoslav Ostojić and Roberto Savio]. – Belgrade : European Center for Peace and Development (ECPD) University for Peace established by the United Nations, 2018 (Belgrade : Graficom uno). – 185 str. : ilustr. ; 23 cm

Tiraž 1.000. – Str. 7: Maurice Strong, Trail-Blazing Leader (1925-2015) / Roberto Savio. – Str. 9-12: Maurice Strong, his hopes and commitments / Roberto Savio. – Preface by the editors: str. 13.– Napomene uz tekst.

ISBN 978-86-7236-109-4

а) Стронг, Морис (1925-2015) – Зборници

COBISS.SR-ID 265000460

© Copyright by ECPD, OtherNews [www.other-news.info](http://www.other-news.info) & Roberto Savio. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced in any form without permission in writing from the publishers

# Contents

Maurice Strong, Trail-Blazing Leader (1925–2015) .....	7
Preface by the editors .....	9
To the many who have made this book possible.....	11
The Earth Charter.....	13
The Maurice Strong I Knew – <b>Alberts, Bruce</b> .....	23
Canada's International Citizen: Maurice Strong A Personal Recollection – <b>Austin, Jack</b> .....	27
Round the Table. Affectionate Memories of Maurice Strong – <b>Bielecki, Tessa</b> .....	32
Maurice Strong and the Quest for Development – <b>Bifani, Paolo</b> ....	35
Following the Spirit of Maurice Strong – <b>Braun, Reto</b> .....	40
Maurice Strong <b>Brundtland, Gro Harlem</b> .....	42
A Mentor and a Friend Forever: Maurice Strong's Love for China CBCGDF – <b>China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation</b> .....	45
In Memory of Maurice Stron – <b>Clarkson, Adrienne</b> .....	56
Maurice Strong–A Global Citizen – <b>Desai, Nitin</b> .....	58
Maurice Strong – <b>DiPerna, Paula</b> .....	63
The Father of Sustainable Development – <b>Dodds, Felix</b> .....	67
A Man for All Seasons <b>Dowdeswell, Elizabeth</b> .....	73
Our Maurice Strong – <b>Engfeldt, Lars-Goran</b> .....	76
Maurice Strong, In Memoriam – <b>Galtung, Jöhan</b> .....	82
Maurice F. Strong: A Historic Figure in the UN and in the North-South Development Saga – <b>Gosovic, Branislav</b> ...	84
Coming Across Maurice Strong for Over 40 Years – <b>Graisse, Jean-Jacques</b> .....	95
A Belated Tribute to Maurice Strong – <b>Haas, Peter</b> .....	100

My Testimony in Memory of Our Dearest and  
Most Revered Friend Maurice Strong – **Ryokichi, Hirono** ..... 105

Vision and Leadership – **Htun, Nay** ..... 108

Maurice Strong – **Iglesias, Enrique** .....115

Maurice Strong, United Nations and Korean  
Peninsula – **Ilitchev, Alexander** ..... 118

My Friend Maurice – **Khosla, Ashok** ..... 123

Maurice Strong–Ecological Entrepreneur – **Koch-Weser Maritta** . . 128

In Praise of Maurice Strong – Koh, Tommy ..... 133

The Wisdom of the Tribal Elders – **Leeburg, Louis**. .... 136

A Contributor to a Better World – **Lees, R. Martin** ..... 140

The Maurice Strong Legacy Scholarships: A Testimony  
to Humanism – **Lipman, Geoffrey**..... 144

Maurice Strong – **Lovejoy, Thomas** ..... 148

Recollections of Maurice Strong – **Marton-Lefèvre, Julia** ..... 150

Maurice Strong, the Watchman of Environment – **Mayor  
Zaragoza, Federico** ..... 156

Maurice Strong–This Was a Man – **Pachauri, Rajendra K.** ..... 162

Memories of Maurice Strong – **Preston, John T.** .....166

The One that Brings the Hope – **Saul, John Ralston**. .... 170

Maurice Strong and the Earth Charter – **Steven C. Rockefeller** ... 175

Maurice Strong, His Hopes and Commitments – **Savio, Robert** .... 181

My 25 Years Journey of Sustainable Development with  
Maurice Strong – **Shah, Mahendra**. .... 185

Maurice Strong's Other Country, Planet Earth –  
**Ramphal, Shridath** ..... 190

Friends of Rio, Friends of Paris, Friends of Maurice Strong –  
**Schwab, Klaus** ..... 196

History Will Rightfully Recognize Mr. Strong –  
**Thompson, William Irwin**..... 200

The Art of Articulating Shared Vision and Global Collaboration.  
A Model of a 21st Century Leader – **Vilela, Mirian**. ....202

A 50+ History of Contacts – **Wolfensohn, James D.**..... 208

About ECPD ..... 212



# Maurice Strong, Trail-Blazing Leader

(1925–2015)

Maurice F. Strong was a *persona sui generis*, a larger-than-life individual, a rare embodiment of the background and enlightened vision needed to understand, conceptualize and launch – globally and auspiciously – the challenge of sustainable development facing humankind.

MFS – as his colleagues labelled him – was the right man at the right time for the task of introducing and promoting in the international agenda a complex, controversial and indeed subversive subject matter, first dubbed as “human environment,” then as “environment and development,” and finally as “sustainable development.”

From the very beginning, when he was thrust into the role of Secretary-General of the 1972 Stockholm UN Conference on Human Environment, he sensed the depth and importance of the subject matter – its potential to transcend and change the nature and direction of the existing dominant political, social and economic system.

This may not have been clear to everyone at the time. However, Strong patiently built the foundations of a long and complex transformation. These foundations have evolved through a lengthy multilateral struggle in the United Nations. They are firm today and their essence cannot be changed, even though it is vehemently challenged from influential quarters. They are a legacy for future generations. Their importance in opening up alternative directions for humankind will be recognized and valued more fully as decades go by.

Strong was a story-book character. A self-made wealthy man with little formal education, he possessed an extraordinary gift for inter-human relations, networking and persuasion. While firmly embedded in the Western-Northern establishment he

understood fully the prevailing global fractures and challenges and thus also won the trust and confidence of the South and the East. Looking beyond the immediate, he foresaw and sought to avoid problems and disasters that were bound to happen unless something was done to rise above the *status quo*.

It is fortunate that Strong emerged on the world scene when he did and found himself in epoch-making situations that will ensure him a distinguished place in the history of human civilization.

Roberto Savio



Strong speaking at Stockholm Academy

# Preface by the editors

The European Centre for Peace and Development (ECPD) was founded in 1983 by the United Nations University for Peace. Its mission is to pursue the twin objective of peace and development. Maurice F. Strong's engagement in UPeace and his global leadership role in sustainable development reflect the very core of the ECPD mandate.

Following the initiative of Roberto Savio, Chairman Emeritus of Inter Press Service, Director for ECPD International Relations and Cooperation and with the support of Maurice's wife, Hanne, written contributions were sought from friends and associates of Maurice Strong to shed light on his work and personality. This volume is the result. It depicts different facets of this global leader whose vision and determined efforts in the multilateral arena have contributed to the well-being of present and future generations of humankind.

The book opens with the text of the Earth Charter. Maurice Strong had hoped that an Earth Charter would be adopted at the 1992 Rio UN Conference on Environment and Development. This was too optimistic given prevailing disagreements and conflicts. Being Strong, he persisted with the Earth Charter idea. If it was not possible to have it accepted in the intergovernmental context, he found a way to achieve this in the framework of UPeace. And the Earth Charter is now a formal document, a legacy of Maurice F. Strong as a global public figure serving humankind and the Planet Earth.

The contributions to this volume by a number of individuals who knew and worked with Strong will hopefully keep alive the memory of this extraordinary personality. This is important as the international community continues to confront global challenges of sustainable development. This includes climate change, an issue that brings into focus the interrelated problems of

environment, development and peace, North-South divides, the nature of human society, polity and economy, and, ultimately, the survival of humankind.

The ECPD is very pleased to have the opportunity to publish this collection of tributes to Maurice F. Strong. The volume will be distributed, with the compliments of ECPD University for Peace UN as the co-editor to government institutions and international organizations. It will be also made available to a wider readership.

*Federico Mayor*

*Negoslav Ostojić*

*Roberto Savio*

## To the many who have made this book possible

As an institution which has prepared and published this volume, ECPD wishes to express its sincere gratitude to all who have made possible this book dedicated to **Maurice F. Strong**, one among the leading figures that spearheaded the United Nations efforts during an important period in the history of humankind.

This volume is a fruit of collective work, and recognition is due to all those who made it possible.

Gratitude is especially due to all those who wrote their own reminiscences of and tributes to **Maurice F. Strong**, and also to some authors and others for the support and very helpful advice they provided.

ECPD is deeply indebted to **Hanne Strong** for approving the project and for co-signing, with **Roberto Savio**, the letter, on ECPD letterhead, inviting contributions and thus making it possible to launch the undertaking with family endorsement.

**Roberto Savio**, IPS President Emeritus, Director of ECPD International Relations and Cooperation was the initiator and moving force of the idea for this book. He deserves very special recognition for this important contribution to the institutional history of the United Nations. His initiative, perseverance, and personal financial contribution were essential for the project to be completed with success.

**Salvatore Altiero**, included by Roberto Savio, did the invaluable, heavy-duty work, without which the book would not have been possible, that of contacting the potential contributors, enlisting them to write their contributions, and assembling the needed material. **Bradley Knopff** undertook the English-language editing.

Maurice Strong's assistants, in Canada, **Suzanne Foote** and **Kristina Mayo**, in consultation with Hanne Strong, provided useful advice and information for the book on MFS.

The **staff and external advisers of ECPD** offered continuous institutional backup, from the very early conceptual discussions, throughout the lengthy process of interaction and follow-up, and during the final stages of the assembling and organizing of the written contributions and photographs, the printing of the book and its distribution.

Particular recognition is owed to the **UN Department of Public Information, DPI**, and **Brenda Fong**, for assisting in the search in DPI Photo Gallery for photos for the book, and for the authorization for them to be used.

Special gratitude is due to **Geoffrey Lipman**, who responded to the ECPD plea for financial assistance for the volume. His highly appreciated contribution helped meet the related extra budgetary expenses at the closing stages of the project.

Finally, very special thanks go to the members of the **ECPD Council**, for authorizing the Centre to engage as publisher in preparing, publishing and distributing the book, a decision that provided the venture with an institutional structure and backup which made it possible.

Thank you all!

Federico Mayor  
President of ECPD Council

Negoslav Ostojic  
ECPD Executive Director

# The Earth Charter

## Preamble

We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace. Towards this end, it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations.



**The Earth Charter.** Strong presenting the Earth Charter Draft I at Rio+5, March 1997 with Steven Rockefeller, Mercedes Sosa, Alexander Likhotal and Mikhael Gorbachev

## **Earth, Our Home**

Humanity is part of a vast evolving universe. Earth, our home, is alive with a unique community of life. The forces of nature make existence a demanding and uncertain adventure, but Earth has provided the conditions essential to life's evolution. The resilience of the community of life and the well-being of humanity depend upon preserving a healthy biosphere with all its ecological systems, a rich variety of plants and animals, fertile soils, pure waters, and clean air. The global environment with its finite resources is a common concern of all peoples. The protection of Earth's vitality, diversity, and beauty is a sacred trust.

## **The Global Situation**

The dominant patterns of production and consumption are causing environmental devastation, the depletion of resources, and a massive extinction of species. Communities are being undermined. The benefits of development are not shared equitably and the gap between rich and poor is widening. Injustice, poverty, ignorance, and violent conflict are widespread and the cause of great suffering. An unprecedented rise in human population has overburdened ecological and social systems. The foundations of global security are threatened. These trends are perilous—but not inevitable.

## **The Challenges Ahead**

The choice is ours: form a global partnership to care for Earth and one another or risk the destruction of ourselves and the diversity of life. Fundamental changes are needed in our values, institutions, and ways of living. We must realize that when basic needs have been met, human development is primarily about being more, not having more. We have the knowledge and technology to provide for all and to reduce our impacts on the environment. The emergence of a global civil society is creating new opportunities to build a democratic and humane world. Our environmental, economic, political, social, and spiritual challenges are interconnected, and together we can forge inclusive solutions.



## Universal Responsibility

To realize these aspirations, we must decide to live with a sense of universal responsibility, identifying ourselves with the whole Earth community as well as our local communities. We are at once citizens of different nations and of one world in which the local and global are linked. Everyone shares responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world. The spirit of human solidarity and kinship with all life is strengthened when we live with reverence for the mystery of being, gratitude for the gift of life, and humility regarding the human place in nature.

We urgently need a shared vision of basic values to provide an ethical foundation for the emerging world community. Therefore, together in hope we affirm the following interdependent principles for a sustainable way of life as a common standard by which the conduct of all individuals, organizations, businesses, governments, and transnational institutions is to be guided and assessed.

### Principles

#### I. Respect and Care for the Community of Life

1. Respect Earth and life in all its diversity.
  - a. Recognize that all beings are interdependent and every form of life has value regardless of its worth to human beings.
  - b. Affirm faith in the inherent dignity of all human beings and in the intellectual, artistic, ethical, and spiritual potential of humanity.
2. Care for the community of life with understanding, compassion, and love.
  - a. Accept that with the right to own, manage, and use natural resources comes the duty to prevent environmental harm and to protect the rights of people.
  - b. Affirm that with increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good.
3. Build democratic societies that are just, participatory, sustainable, and peaceful.

- a. Ensure that communities at all levels guarantee human rights and fundamental freedoms and provide everyone an opportunity to realize his or her full potential.
  - b. Promote social and economic justice, enabling all to achieve a secure and meaningful livelihood that is ecologically responsible.
4. Secure Earth's bounty and beauty for present and future generations.
    - a. Recognize that the freedom of action of each generation is qualified by the needs of future generations.
    - b. Transmit to future generations values, traditions, and institutions that support the long-term flourishing of Earth's human and ecological communities.

In order to fulfill these four broad commitments, it is necessary to:

## II. Ecological Integrity

5. Protect and restore the integrity of Earth's ecological systems, with special concern for biological diversity and the natural processes that sustain life.
  - a. Adopt at all levels sustainable development plans and regulations that make environmental conservation and rehabilitation integral to all development initiatives.
  - b. Establish and safeguard viable nature and biosphere reserves, including wild lands and marine areas, to protect Earth's life support systems, maintain biodiversity, and preserve our natural heritage.
  - c. Promote the recovery of endangered species and ecosystems.
  - d. Control and eradicate non-native or genetically modified organisms harmful to native species and the environment, and prevent introduction of such harmful organisms.
  - e. Manage the use of renewable resources such as water, soil, forest products, and marine life in ways that do not exceed rates of regeneration and that protect the health of ecosystems.
  - f. Manage the extraction and use of non-renewable resources such as minerals and fossil fuels in ways that minimize depletion and cause no serious environmental damage.

6. Prevent harm as the best method of environmental protection and, when knowledge is limited, apply a precautionary approach.
  - a. Take action to avoid the possibility of serious or irreversible environmental harm even when scientific knowledge is incomplete or inconclusive.
  - b. Place the burden of proof on those who argue that a proposed activity will not cause significant harm, and make the responsible parties liable for environmental harm.
  - c. Ensure that decision making addresses the cumulative, long-term, indirect, long distance, and global consequences of human activities.
  - d. Prevent pollution of any part of the environment and allow no build-up of radioactive, toxic, or other hazardous substances.
  - e. Avoid military activities damaging to the environment.
7. Adopt patterns of production, consumption, and reproduction that safeguard Earth's regenerative capacities, human rights, and community well-being.
  - a. Reduce, reuse, and recycle the materials used in production and consumption systems, and ensure that residual waste can be assimilated by ecological systems.
  - b. Act with restraint and efficiency when using energy, and rely increasingly on renewable energy sources such as solar and wind.
  - c. Promote the development, adoption, and equitable transfer of environmentally sound technologies.
  - d. Internalize the full environmental and social costs of goods and services in the selling price, and enable consumers to identify products that meet the highest social and environmental standards.
  - e. Ensure universal access to health care that fosters reproductive health and responsible reproduction.
  - f. Adopt lifestyles that emphasize the quality of life and material sufficiency in a finite world.
8. Advance the study of ecological sustainability and promote the open exchange and wide application of the knowledge acquired.

- a. Support international scientific and technical cooperation on sustainability, with special attention to the needs of developing nations.
- b. Recognize and preserve the traditional knowledge and spiritual wisdom in all cultures that contribute to environmental protection and human well-being.
- c. Ensure that information of vital importance to human health and environmental protection, including genetic information, remains available in the public domain.

### III. Social and Economic Justice

- 9. Eradicate poverty as an ethical, social, and environmental imperative.
  - a. Guarantee the right to potable water, clean air, food security, uncontaminated soil, shelter, and safe sanitation, allocating the national and international resources required.
  - b. Empower every human being with the education and resources to secure a sustainable livelihood, and provide social security and safety nets for those who are unable to support themselves.
  - c. Recognize the ignored, protect the vulnerable, serve those who suffer, and enable them to develop their capacities and to pursue their aspirations.
- 10. Ensure that economic activities and institutions at all levels promote human development in an equitable and sustainable manner.
  - a. Promote the equitable distribution of wealth within nations and among nations.
  - b. Enhance the intellectual, financial, technical, and social resources of developing nations, and relieve them of onerous international debt.
  - c. Ensure that all trade supports sustainable resource use, environmental protection, and progressive labor standards.
  - d. Require multinational corporations and international financial organizations to act transparently in the public good, and hold them accountable for the consequences of their activities.

11. Affirm gender equality and equity as prerequisites to sustainable development and ensure universal access to education, health care, and economic opportunity.
  - a. Secure the human rights of women and girls and end all violence against them.
  - b. Promote the active participation of women in all aspects of economic, political, civil, social, and cultural life as full and equal partners, decision makers, leaders, and beneficiaries.
  - c. Strengthen families and ensure the safety and loving nurture of all family members.
12. Uphold the right of all, without discrimination, to a natural and social environment supportive of human dignity, bodily health, and spiritual well-being, with special attention to the rights of indigenous peoples and minorities.
  - a. Eliminate discrimination in all its forms, such as that based on race, color, sex, sexual orientation, religion, language, and national, ethnic or social origin.
  - b. Affirm the right of indigenous peoples to their spirituality, knowledge, lands and resources and to their related practice of sustainable livelihoods.
  - c. Honor and support the young people of our communities, enabling them to fulfill their essential role in creating sustainable societies.
  - d. Protect and restore outstanding places of cultural and spiritual significance.

#### IV. Democracy, Nonviolence, and Peace

13. Strengthen democratic institutions at all levels, and provide transparency and accountability in governance, inclusive participation in decision making, and access to justice.
  - a. Uphold the right of everyone to receive clear and timely information on environmental matters and all development plans and activities which are likely to affect them or in which they have an interest.
  - b. Support local, regional and global civil society, and promote the meaningful participation of all interested individuals and organizations in decision making.
  - c. Protect the rights to freedom of opinion, expression, peaceful assembly, association, and dissent.

- d. Institute effective and efficient access to administrative and independent judicial procedures, including remedies and redress for environmental harm and the threat of such harm.
  - e. Eliminate corruption in all public and private institutions.
  - f. Strengthen local communities, enabling them to care for their environments, and assign environmental responsibilities to the levels of government where they can be carried out most effectively.
14. Integrate into formal education and life-long learning the knowledge, values, and skills needed for a sustainable way of life.
- a. Provide all, especially children and youth, with educational opportunities that empower them to contribute actively to sustainable development.
  - b. Promote the contribution of the arts and humanities as well as the sciences in sustainability education.
  - c. Enhance the role of the mass media in raising awareness of ecological and social challenges.
  - d. Recognize the importance of moral and spiritual education for sustainable living.
15. Treat all living beings with respect and consideration.
- a. Prevent cruelty to animals kept in human societies and protect them from suffering.
  - b. Protect wild animals from methods of hunting, trapping, and fishing that cause extreme, prolonged, or avoidable suffering.
  - c. Avoid or eliminate to the full extent possible the taking or destruction of non-targeted species.
16. Promote a culture of tolerance, nonviolence, and peace.
- a. Encourage and support mutual understanding, solidarity, and cooperation among all peoples and within and among nations.
  - b. Implement comprehensive strategies to prevent violent conflict and use collaborative problem solving to manage and resolve environmental conflicts and other disputes.
  - c. Demilitarize national security systems to the level of a non-provocative defense posture, and convert military

- resources to peaceful purposes, including ecological restoration.
- d. Eliminate nuclear, biological, and toxic weapons and other weapons of mass destruction.
  - e. Ensure that the use of orbital and outer space supports environmental protection and peace.
  - f. Recognize that peace is the wholeness created by right relationships with oneself, other persons, other cultures, other life, Earth, and the larger whole of which all are a part.

## The Way Forward

As never before in history, common destiny beckons us to seek a new beginning. Such renewal is the promise of these Earth Charter principles. To fulfill this promise, we must commit ourselves to adopt and promote the values and objectives of the Charter.

This requires a change of mind and heart. It requires a new sense of global interdependence and universal responsibility. We must imaginatively develop and apply the vision of a sustainable way of life locally, nationally, regionally, and globally. Our cultural diversity is a precious heritage and different cultures will find their own distinctive ways to realize the vision. We must deepen and expand the global dialogue that generated the Earth Charter, for we have much to learn from the ongoing collaborative search for truth and wisdom.

Life often involves tensions between important values. This can mean difficult choices. However, we must find ways to harmonize diversity with unity, the exercise of freedom with the common good, short-term objectives with long-term goals. Every individual, family, organization, and community has a vital role to play. The arts, sciences, religions, educational institutions, media, businesses, nongovernmental organizations, and governments are all called to offer creative leadership. The partnership of government, civil society, and business is essential for effective governance.

In order to build a sustainable global community, the nations of the world must renew their commitment to the United Nations, fulfill their obligations under existing international agreements, and support the implementation of Earth Charter principles with

an international legally binding instrument on environment and development.

Let ours be a time remembered for the awakening of a new reverence for life, the firm resolve to achieve sustainability, the quickening of the struggle for justice and peace, and the joyful celebration of life.



# The Maurice Strong I knew

Alberts, Bruce\*

My personal interactions with Maurice began in 1997, after I had been invited by Ismail Serageldin – then a Vice President of the World Bank – to be part of the leadership group for the “Third System Review” of the 16 Centers around the globe that com-prise the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Re-search – the CGIAR. This major effort, chaired by Maurice, would take our committee on-site visits to many of the major CGIAR labs, and I personally would travel with Maurice to Mexico, The Netherlands, and Kenya for intensive discussions with experts and representatives of all kinds. I had been assigned to co-chair the subpanel on Science and Strategy with MS Swaminathan from India, while Maurice co-chaired the other subpanel – on Governance, Structure, and Finance – with Whitney MacMillan, the CEO of Cargill.

The whole experience provided a great education for me. At the time, I had a full-time job as President of the US National Academy of Sciences and Chair of the National Research Council, a position that I would occupy from 1993 to 2005. Before that, I had spent nearly 30 years running a university-based research laboratory in biochemistry. This would not only be my introduction to the complex set of international organizations established after World War II, it would be my first real contact with worldwide agricultural research. I would discover that the term *high science* is used by some NGOs to disparage the type of science that I greatly admire, while also seeing first-hand how a more grassroots, applied science can be harnessed to improve livelihoods for the world's poor. And I would quickly befriend my co-chair MS Swaminathan, whose Institute in Chennai, India focuses on harnessing science to eliminate Indian

---

\* Bruce Alberts, Chancellor's Professor of Science and Education University of California, San Francisco.

poverty. I have since visited his projects in rural villages many times, inspiring me to move the US Academy in new directions. Most relevant for this essay was the privilege of watching the highly effective ways in which Maurice managed to get us to produce our ambitious final report of 110 single-spaced pages - with 29 Recommendations - in time to meet our October 1998 deadline for discussion at the annual meeting of the CGIAR system at the World Bank in Washington, DC. (<https://library.cgiar.org/handle/10947/1586>).

As many others will no doubt emphasize in their remarks, Maurice was a master at running complex, contentious committee meetings, making everyone feel that they had an equal chance to contribute, while always moving the agenda forward effectively. It was clear that he was honestly interested in - and respectful of - what everyone had to say, from subsistence farmers, to NGOs, to scientists. And the fact that we all knew of Maurice's history and achievements gave a very special stature to all of our efforts.

During our many committee meetings, Maurice was very frequently called away to discuss some urgent matter on the phone - regardless of what continent or time zone we were in. Most of these calls seemed to involve the massive UN reform plan that he had produced for UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in yet another major report that he had just directed - *Renewing the United Nations: A Program for Reform*. That 95-page report was presented by the Secretary-General to the UN General Assembly in July 1997, and throughout our entire project period, Maurice was serving as the Under-Secretary for UN Reform - an enormously challenging job. This responsibility should have pre-vented any normal human being from agreeing to chair a second major report like ours at the same time. But Maurice was such a dedicated public servant that he had nevertheless accepted the task.

Later I would interact with Maurice in a variety of other contexts. He became a great enthusiast of a new organization that I helped to form in 2000, the InterAcademy Council (IAC). This non-governmental organization, initially located in Amsterdam, is governed by a rotating set of the presidents of the academies of science from 15 nations. The IAC was designed to provide scientific advice to the world, and its initial report - *Inventing*

*a Better Future: A Strategy for building worldwide capacities in science and technology* – was requested by Secretary-General Annan and released by him at the UN in 2004. (<http://www.interacademycouncil.net/File.aspx?id=27016>).

Shortly thereafter, I received a letter from Maurice that contained a "Discussion Draft," in which he wrote:

"The InterAcademy Council is able to enlist a broad and representative cross-section of the world's scientific community in its efforts. Of special importance is its direct access to the academies and scientists of developing countries, whose insight, experience and interest will make an important contribution to both the substantive results of cooperative studies and their credibility. Its mechanisms also have the important effect of re-inforcing the respect for – and support of – scientists and academies in these countries." He then went on to propose "that a non-profit organization be incorporated in an appropriate jurisdiction for the purpose of supporting cooperative research and actions by academies of sciences on issues which can give rise to major risks and vulnerabilities in the world community. ...The ultimate objective should be to raise an endowment of at least one billion dollars."

It was great to learn that Maurice viewed the IAC so favorably, given his incredibly deep expertise in international institutions and issues. But I remember gasping when I read the billion-dollar figure. Maurice was no small thinker! For the next 5 years or so he would periodically try to connect me to wealthy contacts who he thought might become major contributors, in his unending efforts to help.

In the late 2000's I would meet every other year or so with Maurice in China in his office. Maurice had clearly retained his idealistic push to improve the world, and he would always be excited about some new project or another whenever we met. My wife Betty remembers him from those contacts as a very charming gentleman, who always had a good story to tell. Maurice was the unflappable idealist, and his optimism was highly contagious, making him an inspirational leader for all those whose lives he touched. The list of his achievements – from the major conferences he organized, to the institutions that he fathered,

to his many efforts aimed at institutional reform – make it hard to imagine how all this could have been catalyzed by one man.

I was very pleased that, as President of the US National Academy of Sciences, I could present the Academy's highest honor, the Public Welfare Medal, to Maurice in 2004. In 2009, I made it to Gland, Switzerland for Maurice's wonderful 80th birthday celebration at the headquarters of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN). And for inspiration, much needed amidst the distressing political turmoil in my own nation today, I occasionally review the beautiful tributes to Maurice's life presented at his memorial service in Ottawa on January 27, 2016 (<http://www.cpac.ca/en/programs/cpac-special/episodes/46595669/>). It is truly remarkable that one man could affect so many people in so many different ways, playing a major role in making Canada the highly admirable nation that it remains today.

# Canada's international citizen: Maurice Strong

## A personal recollection

Austin, Jack\*

Pivotal events occur in the lives of each of us. In most cases they happen without our awareness. Insight takes place sooner or later and brings with it the realization that meeting someone has had a profound effect on the trajectory of your own life. So it was with my first encounter with Maurice Strong.

In April 1964, the Executive Vice-President of Power Corporation of Canada, an investment holding company, sought a meeting with me in Ottawa to discuss a subsidiary company's successful bid to construct a hotel in Banff National Park. I was then the Executive Assistant to the Minister of Northern Affairs and National Resources, who had responsibility for Canada's national park system. Maurice Strong made a good case for allowing that bid to be revised. It seemed natural to go on to broader topics and in no time I realized that the man before me had an unexpected interest in and grasp also of national and international issues.

What I did not know then, was that he and I would develop a close and lifelong friendship of shared interests and shared activities. We were not long into our relationship when I concluded that Maurice was entrepreneurial in the widest sense. He had a keen business management and investment ability. In national affairs his understanding and networks were more extensive than all but a handful of private citizens. And the scope of his range in world affairs had remained unmatched, outside of people who were day-to-day practitioners in international relations.

Maurice was a prairie boy from a small community in Manitoba. He learned his values as a junior fur trader in the Canadian

---

\* Jack Austin served in the Canadian Government for over 45 years, including Deputy Minister, Minister, and Senator. He and Maurice Strong were colleagues and friends from 1964.

Arctic; as an intern at the United Nations; as an executive in the newly emerging Alberta oil industry; and as a young man living in Africa and developing projects there. You could see in those beginnings the foundation for his lifelong interest in people, in business and the economy, as well as in the cost of destructive environmental practices. Later you had to be impressed by his ability to organize the community of nations to come together to understand and face the issues of environmental management and sustainability.

In 1966, Maurice made his first move to a significant role in the international development aid system. He agreed to leave his position as the then President of Power Corporation to take the leadership of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and then employed his entrepreneurial skills and organizing talents to the creation of an amazing outreach of projects bearing Canada's name. He pioneered collaboration with like organizations in many countries.

That work and the extensive personal relations he developed, along with his exposure to the similar thinking and support of early leaders like Barbara Ward, brought him the leadership of the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Environment in Stockholm. There, some 112 nations identified the environment as a collective global challenge and responsibility. Maurice had earned his long held title as an UN Under-Secretary-General.

While Maurice kept me in the loop on his international endeavors through frequent visits to Ottawa, where his family resided, my closest association with him was in Canadian public policy issues. He was as strong a Canadian nationalist as he was an internationalist.

The period of the 1960's saw an emerging Canadian oil industry largely owned and operated by United States and other foreign enterprises. Canada had no comparable champions either domestically or internationally. The international oil crisis, which began in 1973, demonstrated the supply weaknesses and pricing vulnerability of the Canadian situation. As the then Deputy Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources, I led a study that gave rise in 1975 to the creation of Petro-Canada as a state-owned operator in Canada and abroad. Maurice was the Canadian brought back to Canada to chair this new vehicle and bring it to reality

in a competitive and frankly unwelcoming industry. In so doing he left his task as UN Under-Secretary in Nairobi heading UNEP.

A second call to return to Canada from his international activities and networks came in May 1983. In that year the Canadian government created the Canada Development Investment Corp. (CDIC), to hold and manage a multi-million dollar portfolio of government owned companies in the commercial sector. Maurice, described in the media as *Pierre Trudeau's favorite businessman*, agreed to become Chair and to see to the successful operations of its many subsidiaries until they could be sold to the private Canadian business sector at a realistic value to the Canadian taxpayers. Once again our lives crossed paths as I was the Canadian Cabinet Minister responsible for setting up CDIC, and its sole shareholder.

With the election of the Conservative government of Brian Mulroney in 1984, Maurice stepped down from CDIC and returned to his many business and UN activities on the international scene. Probably no Canadian of his time was better known and recognized by the international community. In our chats he would mention something said to him by the Premier of China, the King of Saudi Arabia, India's Indira Gandhi, Henry Kissinger, or the King of Bhutan. Not to impress, but to convey an insight he was turning over in his mind. On a personal note, my wife and I had the rare experience, thanks to Maurice and his wife Hanne, of accompanying them to Bhutan in the summer of 1981. It is unforgettable, both because of Bhutan and the time the four of us were able to spend together.

Wherever Maurice travelled, he liked to put down roots for a while to study and experience the local community. In Canada I visited him in his homes in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa and rural Ontario, as well as a waterfront home in the Vancouver area and a ranch in Alberta. In the United States he had a magnificent ranch in rural Colorado, and of course places in New York and elsewhere. He spoke many times of his homes in rural France, London, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Australia. When he was an advisor to James Wolfensohn, President of the World Bank, he enjoyed introducing himself as a peasant *farmer*. He was that, but he was the peer of any he worked with in the business and financial world.

Maurice and I shared a long interest in China. I first went there as a government official in 1971. He was not far behind. His international work and interests brought him frequently in touch with the highest levels of China's leadership. In particular his success in bringing China to the United Nations Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972, and his exceptional leadership in again moving forward the international commitment on the environment earned him just accolades from an increasingly aware international community and a grateful China whose role as an international participant in the environment started there.

There were many occasions when Maurice and I discussed the rise of China in the global community, the significance of the challenge of feeding its population, the importance of China's relationship with the United States and the role that Canada, a developed country and neighbor to the United States, could play in the development of a peaceful world order. These talks took place in many locations, including on frequent visits of mine to Beijing where Maurice had taken up residence some twenty years ago with the encouragement of senior Chinese officials to advance his Asian business interests and consulting activities.

Through his experience in the international community, his relationship with a wide network of peers in the international system, his skills as an organizer, and his talents in the architecture of concepts, Maurice has made an indelible impact for the advancement of world order. Few have done as much. He was a global symbol of what Canada meant to so many in values and practices. Canada honored him with its highest recognition, Companion of the Order of Canada. He received countless Honorary Degrees from Universities around the world. The United Nations gave him high recognition.

Maurice saw the enormous transformation taking place with an unparalleled rate of change. He was convinced that a system of world order had to be evolved to ensure that standards of equity and fairness prevailed, or the consequences would be disastrous. At a Global Conference on the Future held in Toronto in 1980, Maurice said; "If we arrogant members of the wealthy, privileged and powerful societies of the industrialized world take an objective look at history, take an objective look at what would happen if war and economic collapse did in fact occur, the rebuilding would not likely occur in any of our countries. There



would be a shift outside of the orbit of the present industrialized world."

From as far back as I can remember in my relationship with Maurice, he described the world as being in a rapid but incoherent transformation. He saw the impoverishment of much of the world community in the 1970's and 1980's as a threat to global stability and his focus on North – South issues was enduring. His search for a process of achieving peaceful progress within a rising tide of prosperity was based on the model of the capitalist market economy, but one in which the benefits of developing a global economy were progressive in nature.

A recollection of Maurice would not be true to his nature if I did not mention his deeply felt connection with a spiritual life. He was committed to the belief that life had meaning beyond the realities of material needs. He viewed the potential for greatness in humanity, for peace and equity, as anchored in a spiritual understanding of the human community. Religious thought interested him. In his early life he was an active member of the YMCA Movement. Later he became attracted to Asian thought, particularly Tibetan Buddhism. Maurice and his wife Hanne practiced that form of meditation and kept in touch with senior Buddhist leaders. They established a community of Tibetan Buddhists at their Ranch at Baca, Colorado.

In Canada, Maurice carried a high profile. He was someone who stirred attention for his imaginative ideas, personal energy, business achievements, but also his competence in and focus on government and public policy as an instrument for social harmony, social equity and economic fairness.

In the international system, Maurice made an enduring contribution. His commitment to the United Nations, to environmental responsibility, and to the developing nations, to universalism itself, made him Canada's international citizen.

# Round the Table. Affectionate Memories of Maurice Strong

Bielecki, Tessa\*

Maurice Strong was my good neighbor in Crestone, Colorado and a memorable mentor. I first saw Crestone in May of 1981. I had just spent a week camping in Havasu, a side canyon of the Grand Canyon in northern Arizona.

I flew to Albuquerque and drove five hours north to Crestone, stopping at the last bend on County Road 66 T to take a long loving look at the *Sangre de Cristos* – the Blood of Christ Mountains. It was a powerful moment of revelation for me as a follower of Christ.

I was part of the Spiritual Life Institute Carmelite Community at that time and arrived with our founder, William McNamara, who died in March 2015, eight months before Maurice, and at the same age. I was also traveling with Dave Denny, another member of our Carmelite community, with whom I created the Desert Foundation in Crestone in 2005, when we both left the Carmelites.

In 1981 we were living in Sedona, Arizona, where we moved in 1963, when it was a wild, spacious desert, suitable for a contemplative retreat center. Then Sedona was “discovered” and became crowded and noisy, spoiled by extensive real estate development. To preserve our silence and solitude, we knew we needed to move, but where? Our friend Bro David Steindl-Rast – a Benedictine monk – told us about Hanne and Maurice Strong and what they were doing in Crestone, Colorado with representatives from many of the world's religious traditions. Crestone

---

\* Tessa Bielecki was the Mother Abbess of the Spiritual Life Institute in Crestone, Colorado and is now co-director of the Desert Foundation ([sandandsky.org](http://sandandsky.org)). She is the author of *Desert Voices*, *Season of Glad Songs*, and several works on St. Teresa of Avila.

wasn't the kind of desert we were used to, but it was certainly a wilderness.

We thought we'd be one of the last groups to settle in Crestone, but we turned out to be one of the first. Until our own hermitages were built, for the first several years, we lived in temporary housing all over town, some of it provided by Hanne and Maurice and their partner, Sylvie Nathanson. It took us over ten years to build and move into the hermitages you see at the Carmelites today.

Maurice was in Crestone more often in those early years, and we shared many visits and stories together. On one of his birthdays, Maurice brought over a group of friends and family. We sang for him, recited poetry, and I even juggled scarves for him. In a thank you letter I still cherish, Maurice suggested we – *take the show on the road*.

Maurice and Hanne not only believed in us as a community, they believed in me as a person. I'm especially grateful for this and the exciting ways I got to collaborate with Maurice on an international level.

In the winter of 1989, I suddenly got a phone call from him, inviting me to speak at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland and replace the Cardinal of Vienna, Austria, who had to cancel at the last minute. *This was actually Hanne's idea!* I didn't even have a passport at the time, and Maurice helped me expedite the process. I was so excited when I arrived in Switzerland, I couldn't stop laughing, and despite my jet lag, I even got to dance with Maurice that night! When I held Maurice's ashes at the memorial service for him in Crestone in January 2016, it was the only other time I'd held him in my arms since that dance in Davos!

When Maurice organized the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, he invited two representatives from each part of the world to help draft the Earth Charter. I was one of the two from the United States and scared to death in the presence of people like Russian President Mikhail Gorbachev. Maurice encouraged me, but eventually I had to withdraw from the group because my responsibilities at home were too demanding. One of the principles I've always tried to live by is this: *Cut out half of what you're doing and do the other half well.*

Hanne tells a wonderful story of how Maurice created a special table for the Earth Summit in Rio. He had the table built big enough for *one* seat for each one of the world leaders attending. There was no room for any advisors or assistants. I never saw that table, but I did gather around other tables with Maurice over the years: around the table at the Carmelites, at Hanne and Maurice's home in Crestone, at special meals in Davos and in Rio, where Maurice was always interested in hearing from everyone at the table, asking provocative questions and listening attentively to our answers.

I especially remember one New Year's Eve at Hanne and Maurice's. The man we affectionately call *Father Earth* didn't steal the limelight from anyone. Instead, he went around the table and asked each one of us about our hopes and aspirations for the New Year, genuinely caring about each one of our answers and each person around the table.

It seems to me that the table is a good metaphor for Maurice's life and his contribution to the world. He had a special gift for gathering people *round the table*, inspiring them to express what was deep in their hearts, and listening carefully to all the voices. This is the kind of leadership we need today: in our families, in our circles of friends, our cities and our nations, and on the larger scale of our global human family.

In the Roman Catholic tradition, we pray a beautiful prayer when someone dies:

"Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and may perpetual light shine upon him." I love how we emphasize *light* at the time of death and not darkness. I pray this often for Maurice Strong.

Here's another comforting prayer for light, a song-prayer not only for Maurice, but for Hanne, for all Maurice's family and friends, and for the whole Earth, so dearly loved by Maurice Strong: "I am sending you light, to heal you, to hold you. I am sending you light, to hold you in love."

# Maurice Strong and the quest for development

Bifani, Paolo\*

To write about Maurice Strong is a challenging yet pleasant task. It is a true challenge because of his complex personality, his own multitude of interests, and activities that he was involved in, and was fully committed to. A gratifying one for what Maurice Strong was, and what he has achieved. Hazel Henderson<sup>1</sup> defined him as a unique player in the world stage. The subject of his life was the need to deal with poverty moved by an abiding sense of world injustice. He paid particular attention to the global threats represented by poverty, hunger, conflicts, migration, and environmental deterioration. He had an unwavering commitment to multilateralism as a conceptual framework for international relations and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. He believed that the United Nations is the effective forum through which these issues can be addressed and called for the strengthening of the United Nations. He regretted the almost total lack of capacity for enforcement of the existing international regime, which he considered as the greatest weakness of the United Nations. At the same time, he vouched for the respect of national sovereignty as an *"immutable, indeed sacred principle of international relations.... It is simply not feasible for sovereignty to be exercised unilaterally by individual nation states, however powerful."*<sup>2</sup> He followed his vision for a better world through endurance.

Maurice Strong was a vigorous initiator, tireless and effective leader inserting innovative ideas, I was always in awe and enthralled by his ideas and of how he pursued them, to stimulate people to adopt as well as to elaborate them until their acceptance by politicians, diplomats, academics, scholars

\* Paolo Bifani, Former senior officer of the United Nations (ECLA, UNEP, UNCTAD, WIPO), consultant to FAO, IDB, OECD, Commission of the EU, ILO, CARICOM, Brundtland Commission and South Commission.

<sup>1</sup> Hazel Henderson. Appreciating Maurice Strong Ethical Markets, August 2009

<sup>2</sup> Maurice Strong: Statement at the 1992 Earth Summit

and people in general – unfortunately not always translated into practical implementation. He had a wonderful capacity to listen to people.

It is a mistake to see Maurice Strong as an environmentalist. The environment was but a component of his systemic vision of the world, as he was able to put it in the context of development, of policy and into the international agenda. He clearly stated his systemic view in the opening statement at the Rio Conference: "*This is not a single issue conference. Rather, it deals with the overall cause and effect system through which a broad range of human activities interact to shape our future*". In the introduction to the first edition of one of my books he wrote that environmental issues couldn't be considered as mere external facts affected by development, rather they are intrinsic facts intimately linked with the development process. This approach was already on Maurice Strong's mind when in 1971, U Thant requested him to lead the preparation and implementation of the bogged-down preparations for the Stockholm Conference, decided by the UN General Assembly Resolution 2398 in 1969. He was a visionary and had burgeoning understanding of sustainable development when no one knew what it was. For Maurice Strong it was not necessary to read textbooks and theories about economic growth and development. Instinctively, he knew that economic growth cannot be identified with development and he had the farsightedness of development as a multidimensional concept and of sustainability as a *sine-qua-non* condition.

One of the causes of the stillness in the preparation of the Stockholm conference was the reluctance and suspicion of developing countries *vis-a-vis* the environmental issue. Maurice Strong confronted this skepticism from three complementary angles. The first was to commission Barbara Ward, Lady Jackson, and Robert Dubos to prepare an unofficial report for the Conference. The report known as: "Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet" was the product of the elaboration of the reply obtained from 70 personalities such as Margaret Mead, Raul Prebisch, Barry Commoner, Thor Heyerdhal, Saburo Okita, Aurelio Peccei and several Nobel laureates: Abdus Salam and Glean Seaborg (Physics) Mac Farlen Brunet, Konrad Lorenz, Peter Medawar (Physiology, Medicine), Arthur Lewis, Jan Tinbergen, Gunnar Myrdal (Economics).

The report contributed to overcome the narrow view that environmental issues were restricted to pollution and opened the debate on the exhaustion of non-renewable natural resources and the concept of outer limits. It was very timely because of this growing concern – triggered by the oil crisis – about the finiteness of non-renewable natural resources. Secondly he convened a seminar on Environment and Development, attended by leading economists included Jan Tinbergen, Samir Amin, Hans Singer; Mahub ul Haq, Felipe Herrera, Sigheto Tsuru and Gamani Corea. It attempted to overcome the dichotomy between environment and economy and the development traditional approach restricted to economic growth. Strong defined the Founex seminar as "*a major turning point in the development-environment dialogue*;"<sup>1</sup> The third element of his strategy was to involve influential de-veloping countries leaders; So he invited Brazilian Ambassador Ozorio de Almeida, to the Founex seminar and flew to India to meet Indira Gandhi who was very influential in the Group of 77. The move proved to be effective for the most quoted governmental interventions at the Stockholm conference were those of Indira Gandhi and Ozorio de Almeida. These efforts were only partially reflected in the resolution adopted in Stockholm. Although principles were more or less accepted, they were not practically embraced. For example, the UNEP mandate on the economic aspects was restricted to pollution, trans-boundary pollution and trade while the word development was carefully omitted in the resolution that created UNEP. The division dealing with economic issues in the newly created organization was: Division for Trade and Trans-boundary Pollution.

When Strong took over as the Executive Director of UNEP he envisaged the new organization as a catalyst, initiator and coordinator for linking environmental and development issues. He perseveringly pursued his own ideas: among others, he promoted Ignacy Sachs' elaboration of the eco-development concept and Marc Nerfin's project on outer limits. However, the most important initiative was to convene in collaboration with Gamani

---

1 Maurice Strong. Introduction to: Development and Environment. Report and working papers of a Panel of Experts, convened by The Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. Founex, Switzerland. June 1971. Mouton: Paris 1972

Maurice Strong: Where on Earth are we going?

Corea, recently appointed as UNCTAD Secretary-General, a seminar on Patterns of Resource Use, Environment and Development Strategies, to be held in Cocoyoc (Mexico). The seminar attended by Nobel laureates such as Wassily Leontief and other international personalities, some already mentioned, was one of the most influential world events in the redefinition of the economy and environment interrelationship and development. Although some ideas concerning development and growth, diversity, sustainability already existed they were not integrated in a comprehensive concept. At Cocoyoc, the idea of "growth first" and the "trickle down" approach strongly promoted by the World Bank was rejected. It was stated that "*other needs, goals and values*" must be included in the development concept. The diversity of development process was highlighted, rejecting the *un-linear view of development as an effort to imitate the historical model of today developed countries*<sup>1</sup>. New styles of development ought to be considered together with institutional, educational and other components needed to sustain development, stressing the partnership with nature and solidarity with future generations. Consequently, all the elements to define sustainable development were in place. Cocoyoc motivated many reactions, among them from the US Secretary of State Henry Kissinger who sent a long telegram to the organizers and the Chairwoman of the Seminar, Barbara Ward, rejecting *in toto* the declaration.

I was thrilled to work with all these personalities. Back in UNEP, preparing a contribution for the UNEP report to its Governing Council, I used the expressions "sustainable" and "other styles of development". Mostafa Tolba – who succeeded Maurice Strong as UNEP Director – returned the draft to me with a red pencil note: "Paolo remember that development is not our business".

But the seed was already planted: the original Division for Trade and Transboundary Pollution was renamed as Economic and Social Division. UNEP promoted and financed a set of projects on Alternative Patterns of Development and Life Styles, implemented in the different regions by the UN Regional Commission, (ECA, ECLA, ECE, ESCAP, ESCWA).

In the early 1980s The World Commission on Environment and Development was created, while Brundtland nominally chaired

<sup>1</sup> The Cocoyoc Declaration



the Commission, Maurice Strong did much of the legwork to meet with politicians, diplomats, NGOs. And then he was appointed as Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Environment and Development also known as the Earth Summit. He established his headquarters for the preparations at Conches, in Geneva, where meetings, working seminars, politicians and scholars gathered, papers were produced. At the Rio conference Maurice Strong was at the apogee, overseeing the largest UN meeting ever held, a unique achievement in diplomacy standing by the concept of sustainable development, laying down three global conventions on climate, biodiversity and dry-lands; together with the AGENDA 21 an agreement on a set of principles to start off the world on the pathway to sustainable development. It also included the new, though resisted, fundamental concept of common differentiated responsibilities. Strong's innovative ideas have evolved, been polished and enriched, and finally embedded in the development thinking and the economic, political and ecological theory. They make-up the basic conceptual framework to steer the United Nations and the international relations.

As Kofi A. Annan said: *"if the world succeeds making a transition to truly sustainable development, all of us will owe no small debt of gratitude to Maurice Strong, whose prescience and dynamic presence on the international stage have played a key role in convincing governments and grassroots alike to embrace the principle- if not yet the practice- of adopting a new, long term, custodial approach to the global environment"*<sup>1</sup>.

The concept of sustainable development has been popularized, manipulated, misinterpreted, distorted, appropriated, tergiversated, its triteness, and alas scarcely implemented. Discouraged? No, we have to take from Maurice Strong's own saying: *"Since we cannot escape, we must endure, and since we cannot give up, we must continue the struggle. We must also grasp at what straws are ... Perhaps in the chaos and degradation we have experienced, the seeds of a new order have finally been planted, and deep in the muck strong new wood is growing. Perhaps not. But life without hope is a living dead."*<sup>2</sup>

---

1 Kofi A. Annan, Foreword to Maurice Strong Book: Where on Earth are we going?

2 Maurice Strong, Where on Earth are we going?, chapter one, op. cit.

# Following the spirit of Maurice Strong

Braun, Reto\*

I made Maurice's acquaintance in 1986, when we served on an advisory board together. In 2000 we met again in Washington DC at a WEF meeting. Knowing of Maurice's many important contributions to our Planet Earth, we discussed a possible cooperation. Maurice then suggested I join him in playing a role in the Earth Council organization, he had founded after the Rio Summit in 1992, which he had chaired.

I then registered the Earth Council Geneva organization, and we were fortunate, along with our prestigious board of directors, to have Maurice serve as honorary Chairman. The organization developed e-learning modules, primarily in English but also in Chinese and Spanish, which were used in over 80 countries around the world. The e-learning modules were focused on subjects including deforestation, sustainable development, global trade, climate change and biodiversity.

The full board as well as Maurice supported following a Board decision that I suggested and which, we then decided to focus on specific projects to help provide children with fresh water. A partnership was founded with the wellknown IMC (International Medical Corps), a Los Angeles-based NGO with a far-reaching humanitarian agenda.

Following the spirit of Maurice Strong and the Earth Council movement, with our partners, we have been involved with projects and initiatives to help save thousands of children, primarily in the Middle East and Africa.

The career of Maurice is no doubt a remarkable one. He had strong convictions about the topic of climate change and our need to take care of our only home, Planet Earth, which he

---

\* Reto Braun, Chairman, Earth Council Geneva, following a career in the business world and as Postmaster General of Switzerland.

expressed both eloquently and urgently in his book "Where on Earth are we going?". His contacts worldwide allowed him to implement programs and institutions like UNEP, which will benefit humanity for years to come. With his departure, the world lost a champion, and I lost a dear friend.



Keynote address

# Maurice Strong

Brundtland, Gro Harlem\*

As I have looked into some of the many reports addressing the man, his life, his contributions in so many areas of global concern, it strikes me that my Maurice Strong, a key member of the World Commission on Environment and Development, is nowhere to be found. It is maybe understandable. The Commission often has been referred to as "The Brundtland Commission," and Maurice Strong was a well-known internationalist and UN Leader on the Environment long before I was approached by the UN Secretary-General to chair the Commission in 1983. The Stockholm Conference in 1972, where he played a major role, was more than 10 years earlier than this effort to set up our new and independent Commission. Due to the key role Maurice Strong did play in my Commission, I will focus on this part of his many-faceted life, and on the impact we had on global awareness in the critical areas of Environment and Sustainable Development.

First, as I had taken on the seemingly unlimited task of addressing all the interlinked challenges of our mandate, Maurice Strong was one of the first people I asked to see. We first met in New York. Maurice was full of enthusiasm and positive thinking around the critical issues we needed to dig into. I was greatly relieved when he also responded positively to my request to him that he join the efforts we were now moving towards. I was looking at finding people with experience from different walks of life. Maurice was certainly a great asset, with his broad background, both from the private and public sector, in his own country, Canada, as well as an international public servant. A global agenda for change, this was what the World Commission was asked to formulate – nothing less:

---

\* Gro Harlem Brundtland, MD, MPH, Prime Minister of Norway, Director General of WHO, Chair World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED).

1. To propose long-term environmental strategies for achieving sustainable development by the year 2000 and beyond
2. To recommend ways as concern the environment which may be translated into greater cooperation among developing countries and between countries at different stages of economic and social development and lead to the achievement of common and mutually supportive objectives that are taking into account the interrelationships between people, resources, environment and development.

Maurice had a background from the resources industry, an involvement that to him demonstrated how its development inflicted significant damage to the environment. He knew that it would only be through better and more responsible management of development that the environment could be protected.

I had, from my perspective, identified the essence of human rights for all, women and men, the right to development, and had become fully aware that the global environment could only be protected if we addressed the two issues as inseparable.

Throughout our work on the Commission, Maurice was a strong and convincing voice of knowledge, concern, passion and determination.

He was an active participant in all of our discussions as we struggled to analyze, across all sectors, the challenges from industry, agriculture, energy, water, biodiversity, human rights, population, reproductive health, always based on science and on fundamental values.

He was key in our working out of the definition we finally concluded upon to describe what sustainable development is all about: A pattern of development that meets the needs of present generations, without undermining the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

It was clearly a great benefit to the follow up of our report "Our Common Future," that Maurice Strong took on the leadership on behalf of the UN at the Earth Summit in Rio, to be held five years after the report launch in London, in 1987.

I have looked at the statement Maurice Strong gave at the Special United Nations General Assembly Event on Rio plus twenty, on October 25, 2011. He stayed on message:

"It has never been more important to heed the evidence of science that time is running out on our ability to manage successfully our impacts on the Earth's environmental, biodiversity, resource and life-support systems on which human life as we know it depends. We must deal with this as the most dangerous security issue humanity has ever faced, with the very conditions necessary to life on Earth at risk."

As he also addressed the inadequacies of our economic system, he draws from his many years of experience in China, and concludes:

"The growing inequities in sharing the benefits of economic growth continue to provide a widening rich-poor divide in virtually all countries, even in China, which has lifted more people out of poverty than any nation has ever done. This undermines the prospect of enabling the poor and disadvantaged to share fully in the benefits of sustainable development and will lead to social unrest, evidence of which is already emerging."

Indeed, in today's world, the issue of inequality has reemerged as a great global concern, one that Maurice Strong was acutely aware of towards the end of his long and impressive life of service to humanity and the common good.



MFS addressing NGO Forum at The Rio Earth Summit 1992

# A Mentor and a friend forever: Maurice Strong's love for China

CBCGDF – China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation\*

The Honorable Maurice Strong was the founder of the world's environmental movement, father of protecting the earth. He spent most of his later years in China and was a mentor and friend of the Chinese people. He was not only a facilitator and founder of the cause of the global environmental governance and sustainable development, but also an important mentor to many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the global sustainable development field. He devoted his life's power and wisdom to the cause of global sustainable development, and he promoted the cause of global environmental governance and the spirit of "Earth Worker" he represented.

Maurice Strong was a proactive supporter of the work of China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF). The friendship between this revered man and the Secretary-General of CBCGDF Dr. Zhou lasted for more than a decade, and it is remembered and cherished by CBCGDF which has contributed to the cause of environmental protection in China. His example and inspiration are still vibrant and will remain among the greatest assets of the CBCGDF. Today, China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation is a member of IUCN and UN's Global Compact, and an accredited observer of UN's IPBES. It is also a member of GGBN, a partner of CMS, and an observer of CITES and ITPGRFA of UN's FAO. As the leader of environmental justice, CBCGDF has filed more than

---

\* China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF) is a leading nationwide non-profit public foundation and a social legal entity dedicated to biodiversity conservation and green development. It is an independent NGO on environment, biodiversity conservation, sustainability and CCAfa ("Community Conservation Area").

50% of China's EPIL cases to date. CBCGDF has funded hundreds of grassroots NGOs and supported thousands of individuals and hosted many environmental & conservational events around the country to raise awareness and involve the people.

At the end of 2017, Dr. Zhou and CBCGDF Senior Advisor Professor Fredrick Dubee met with their old friend professor C.S. Ki-ang, founding Director of Beijing University Environment Fund. In their conversation, they spontaneously brought up Maurice Strong, their common friend, and expressed admiration for his long-term vision of world development and his tremendous contribution to the United Nations. They could not help sharing their great sorrow at Maurice Strong's passing.

From his earliest days, Maurice Strong had a deep interest in and fascination for China and has travelled extensively in China for more than 40 years as a business leader, as a member of the World Bank and UN senior leadership team, as a leading edge advocate for sustainable development and ecological responsibility.

In his later years, Maurice Strong spent most of his time in China as an advisor, active in developing business relationships in the environment, energy, and technology sectors. His principal activities were centred at Beijing University, where he was an active Honorary Professor, as well as Honorary Chairman of its Environmental Foundation and Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Institute for Research on Security and Sustainability for Northeast Asia, where he brought to bear his experience with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Indeed, Secretary-General Kofi Annan, near the end of his term, paid the following tribute to Maurice Strong: "Looking back on our time together, we have shared many trials and tribulations and I am grateful that I had the benefit of your global vision and wise counsel on many critical issues, not least the delicate question of the Korean Peninsula and China's changing role in the world. Your unwavering commitment to the environment, multilateralism and peaceful resolution of conflicts is especially appreciated."

Kofi Annan first proposed the "Global Compact" at the World Economic Forum on January 31, 1999. His proposal received good responses. The "Global Compact" was officially launched at the





Maurice Strong with the former Chinese President Hu Jintao

UN headquarters on July 26, 2000. Prof. Dubee, a Global Compact pioneer and responsible to help China develop the Global Compact, with the support of Maurice Strong, worked closely with Dr. Zhou who became the strongest advocate for "Global Compact" and made great efforts to share its goals and blueprint with the business community, especially with entrepreneurs from the "Glory (GuangCai)" initiative and the China Federation of Industry and Commerce. Dr Zhou understood that "GuangCai" and "Global Compact" are essentially complementary. "Guang-Cai" calls on entrepreneurs to invest in undeveloped areas. The Global Compact advocates that entrepreneurs should focus on social responsibilities and strive to integrate the GC Principles in the strategic direction and operating practices of each company, a way for enterprises and society to develop more harmoniously. The two can learn from each other, and by being linked together they can improve their contents.

Professor Dubee, now a senior advisor to CBCGDF, was a senior adviser to the UN Secretariat and a senior consultant to the Global Compact Office. He also was a longtime colleague and former friend of Kofi Annan and Maurice Strong. Under his leadership and efforts, the "Global Compact" advocated by the UN and its ten initiatives have been greatly developed. At that time, through Mr. Dubee's introducing, Dr. Zhou's "GuangCai" undertaking met

with "Global Compact". After their active and meticulous discussions via emails, on October 11, 2004, Maurice Strong accompanied Annan to a symposium with representatives of Chinese entrepreneurs at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse. Hu Deping, at the time, Deputy Minister of the United Front Work Department of CPC Central Committee and Vice President of China, Guang-cai, Undertaking Promotion Association hosted the symposium. Chen Jinhua, President of the China Enterprise Confederation, Wang Guangya, the Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations, and 15 entrepreneurs, including Dr. Zhou, attended the symposium. This was the first meeting between Mr. Strong and Dr. Zhou.

At the symposium, Chinese entrepreneurs responded to Annan's calling enthusiastically. They introduced the contribution of their respective companies in the Guangcai undertaking and expressed their respect for the Global Compact advocated by Secretary-General Annan and demonstrated their willingness to participate. Since then, the Global Compact has been promoted in China. CBCGDF is also a member of the UN Global Compact.

Maurice Strong remained a lifelong world-class environmentalist and was universally recognized for his care and leadership. Though retired and in failing health, he was a senior adviser to the President of the World Bank and a member of the Management Committee; He was an honorary professor at Beijing University, Tongji University and China Institute of Environmental Management; and Honorary Chairman of North East Asia Institute for Sustainable Development and Regional Security at Beijing University; Deputy Secretary-General for Development Affairs; also sponsor of the Earth Summit. In addition, he also served as the director of the Earth Committee Foundation, Chairman of the World Economic Forum Foundation and was the top-class figure in the global environmental protection field. In China, Maurice Strong has done a great deal of assistance in the development and implementation of the Climate Change Convention and the Kyoto Protocol, including the establishment of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and was actively involved in working with Chinese officials and experts to facilitate the establishment of the mechanism. In 2012, Maurice Strong provided extensive support to UN Rio + 20 Secretary-General

Sha Zukang. Maurice Strong shared all he learned as the Secretary-General of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit.

Maurice Strong always believed that China must be considered as a country with a key role in shaping the world's environmental and ecological future, and that China's commitment is an important guarantee for dealing successfully with and solving these challenges. Maurice Strong, as the Secretary-General of the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm, First World Conference of the International Community on Environmental Issues, was particularly impressed by the China's high-level delegation, organized by Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai. During the Conference, the Chinese delegation, represented by Qu Geping, was supported and helped by Maurice Strong. "Every morning when I saw Qu, I would detail the agenda of the day and write down the notes." When recalling those stories Maurice Strong smiled and said: "I also gave him my ideas, which later they took. I had a very good relationship with the Chinese delegation."

After China first participated in the 1972 UN Conference on Human Environment in Stockholm, Premier Zhou Enlai decided to set up an environmental protection agency. To strengthen



Qu Geping, at the Chinese delegation at the Stockholm Summit in 1972.



Maurice met with Qu Geping in 2012.

international cooperation in the field of environmental protection, Chinese government established China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED) in 1992. Premier Wen Jiabao was then present at the 2008 CCICED annual meeting. Speaking of China's attending the first UN Conference on Human Environment in 1972, Maurice Strong recalled: "I have a very deep relationship with China. I have established contact with China before the Stockholm Conference. After the Conference, Qu Geping became my friend. Qu is an environmental expert respected by the world. My environmental career has a lot to do with China, which is why I am willing to live and spend the final stage of my career in China. All the actions of China have an important impact on the world."

Qu was China's first permanent Representative to the UNEP and the first director of the National Environmental Protection Agency. "Maurice Strong was very friendly to us." He said, "Through the Stockholm Conference, our friendship laid a good foundation." Before the Conference, people thought that pollution was a capitalist countries' issue and concern and that the socialist country does not have a pollution problem. But it was the Conference that gave the Chinese delegation an opportunity to understand the global environmental protection process and the

gap in China's environmental protection. After the delegation returned to China, it was suggested that the first National Environmental Protection Conference be convened in 1973, which also marked the beginning of the environmental protection in China. Qu said that had Maurice Strong not come to Beijing to invite China to participate in the UN Conference on Human Environment, and awakened Chinese people, then perhaps there would have been no first National Environmental Protection Conference. In the decades that followed, Maurice Strong visited China many times, to make suggestions for China's environmental protection. Qu also said that Maurice Strong is a milestone figure in the history of the world's environmental protection. His passing is an irreparable loss to the international environmental protection community.

Another reason for the relationship between Maurice Strong and China is that he was influenced by Anna Louise Strong.<sup>1</sup> He once said to Chinese media: "My origins with China really came from her."

In 1992, Maurice Strong returned to the United Nations as Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, also known as "Earth Summit". He led UNCED to a successful conclusion, and its adopting the Agenda 21 and the biodiversity and climate change conventions, and launching the concept of "sustainable development" is today the guiding principle for the international community. Later, as concerns climate change, together with the Chinese officials, he contributed to the "Clean Development Mechanism (CDM)", which aims for the developed countries to help developing countries to achieve emissions reduction by providing them with corresponding funds and technologies, which could be counted as part of their own emission reduction targets.

Dr. Zhou recalls his visit to the United States: "In the last months of Mr. Strong, he was still on the phone with us to help us

---

1 Anna Louise Strong, (1885—1970) was a 20th-century American journalist and activist, best known for her reporting on and support for movements in the Soviet Union and the People's Republic of China. She wrote over 30 books and varied articles, and she published numerous articles and books about developments in the nascent Soviet Union and then in China, based on her extensive travel in and firsthand knowledge of those countries. Maurice Strong is said to be related to Anna Louise Strong

develop our ideas and support our work. When he fell and injured himself at home, he drove from Toronto to Buffalo, where I was, to discuss our work and cooperation. Mr. Strong's meeting with me in such a physical condition was exceptionally precious and unforgettable." It reveals Maurice Strong's passion for China's cause.

More than a decade ago, Maurice Strong introduced the Club of Rome to Dr. Zhou, and thus established a marriage with the Club of Rome. Dr. Zhou became the first official Chinese member of the Club of Rome. CBCGDF and the Club of Rome have communicated and interacted on many issues such as biodiversity conservation and sustainable development issues, the strategy of "going globally" and the construction of ecological civilization.

At the beginning of 2018, Dr. Zhou was invited to attend the "2018 China Electric Vehicle Committee of 100 Forum" held in Beijing. The forum is a national third-party think tank in the field of electric vehicles. At the forum, Dr. Zhou made a report on "An Accelerated Decarbonization Strategy for China." This report was the topic discussed by Professor Jorgan Randers from the Club of Rome, Professor Dubee and Dr. Zhou during the visit to Mr. Chen Qingtai from the Committee of 100. Everyone thinks that the policies of electric vehicles are closely related to the world's environment and sustainable development. Dr. Zhou pointed out that the current domestic electric vehicles mostly use electric power generated by coal combustion. According to the current development situation, more than 85% of electric vehicles' power comes from coal burning, so there is no significant contribution in decarbonization, reducing carbon emission and sustainable development. There must be a decarbonization strategy to combine the development of electric vehicles with clean energy and sustainable development. These ideas are just a follow up and continuation of Maurice Strong's inspiration and initiative.

In memory of Maurice Strong, the SUNX (Strong Universal Network) was established to ensure that his 20 years of hard work in the tourism industry would continue to promote cooperation in the field of "Green Growth". "Green Growth" was initiated by Maurice Strong and Dr. Zhou's common friend Professor Geoffrey Lipman, Chairman of the International Tourism

Partnership Council and former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Felix Dodds and others, to promote cooperation in the field of tourism. SUNx aims to promote the resilience to climate change, study the positive and negative effects of climate change on tourism, analyze and calculate and manage accordingly. SUNx is currently centered on "green growth" and is consistent with the Paris Agreement 2050's target. Given extensive research, many databases and constant innovation, this is a continuing requirement.

Maurice Strong was actively advocating the establishment of World Environment University (WEU) during his lifetime. Dr. Zhou's proposal was to establish WEU in China, but Mr. Strong recommended the location to be selected in Jeju Island, South Korea. He visited many places in the world including Jeju Island for this purpose. At the same time, he also discussed the matter with Dr. Zhou many times. In this connection, Professor C.S. Kiang, after consulting with a few friends of Mr. Strong's who discussed the matter with him in his lifetime, said that now is the time for Dr. Zhou to promote the establishment of the WEU.

In November 2016, Xie Boyang, the head of CBCGDF and Dr. Zhou were invited to visit the Caofeidian wetland in Tangshan. Xie Boyang praised the wetland protection work in Caofeidian area and thanked them for their efforts in wetland conservation. Between 2008 and 2009, Maurice Strong went to Caofeidian a couple of times along with Dr. Zhou.

At the Caofeidian Forum on October 17, 2009, Maurice Strong praised the Tangshan Caofeidian as one of the most exciting areas in China. The first Caofeidian Forum focused on the subject of "sustainable development and new industrialization in the context of the international financial crisis". Renowned Chinese and foreign experts and scholars jointly discussed how to better promote new-type industrialization and how to achieve sustainable development in response to the crisis. Mr. Strong pointed out in his speech that economic and environmental issues will affect the nature of the economy, the impact of destruction of natural resources is much higher than that of the economic crisis, and it is necessary to actively respond to environmental and resource issues.

In his later years, Maurice Strong was full of spirit, active in thinking, and very affectionate and endearing. The old man had deep feelings for the environmental protection undertakings of China. China's work occupied an important position in his entire career. Therefore, he often travelled to Beijing in his later years. When living in Beijing, Mr. Strong often asked Dr. Zhou to visit his office and home for in-depth communication on biodiversity conservation and sustainable development issues.

Nearly 80-year-old Maurice Strong, with a wise vision, was full of young people's thinking and vitality. His residence and office in Beijing, with pictures of him with successive Chinese leaders on the walls, were impressive. It had been discussed several times to build a memorial hall for Mr. Strong. His relevant cultural relics, including books, letters, etc., are being publicly solicited. With our deep cherishment of the memory of Mr. Strong, we hope that the public will participate and help us to collect memories in any format that Maurice Strong left.

When Mr. Strong was not in Beijing due to physical condition, he was still in close contact with Dr. Zhou. He once told Dr. Zhou: "as long as you call me, I would go to Beijing." Beijing has air pollution. An air purifier is placed at his home in Beijing, to keep abreast of the pollution index. Before the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Maurice Strong's legs were rather weak, but he still insisted on taking the light rail. In his opinion this act would contribute to reducing the carbon dioxide emissions of Beijing's city traffic. Mr. Strong always believed that only by participating in business can we truly achieve environmental protection. After shifting his focus to Beijing, he helped Chinese companies pay attention to the economic benefits of environmental protection while conserving energy and reducing emissions.

Maurice Strong, who was a special advisor to Annan at the time, visited North Korea as a special UN mission to explore ways to resolve the North Korean nuclear crisis. He had been involved in humanitarian efforts in North Korea for some time. He had always been very concerned about North Korea and had done a lot of work for it. He concerned about the protection of the ecological environment there and believed that as a community of human destiny, it is necessary to promote the wider participation of ecological greening climate issues.



Maurice Strong left his footprints in many regions, provinces and cities in China during his lifetime and worked tirelessly to personally participate in ecological and environmental protection forums and activities. Each event provided exciting and inspiring speeches. They reveal this old man's investment in China's environmental protection cause and his love for China, as well as his insights into the world economy, environmental protection and other fields.



Maurice Strong at Education Forum for Asia Council Conference, Chengdu, 2013

# In Memory of Maurice Strong

Clarkson, Adrienne\*

The Maurice Strong that I first met when I interviewed him for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation at the Stockholm Conference – that amazing prodigious feat of the imagination in 1972 – struck me immediately by his brilliant eyes. He was more Ariel than Prospero. *The New Yorker* had just published an admiring, perceptive, and now extremely celebrated profile of him. And, of course, they had interviewed people who thought that concern for the environment was *looney* and so they described Maurice variously as resembling an apprentice jockey, a shoe salesman, and an insurance agent who had failed to make the million-dollar sales club. That appearances are deceiving has never been more accurate than describing this brilliant, unique, historic figure in that way.

Maurice's passion for the cause of the Earth came from a personal strength and generosity because he was Nature's natural gentleman. He was a quintessential Canadian who knew in his very core what hardship, poverty, and struggle were but did not think others had to experience it. He knew the importance of ideas, but he never had contempt for those who didn't. He knew what pettiness was, but he always acted out of a profound generosity himself.

Four years after Stockholm, my life became inextricably linked to that of his assistant John Ralston Saul, who would later become my husband, and with that Maurice became an amazing and energizing part of my life forever. His advocacy and ideas were always invaluable; his enthusiasm and humour totally, utterly supportive. His love and that of Hanne was always there for us. His life was frenetic and meaningful – the Canadian writer Andrew Cohen has phrased it poignantly as “feverish and consequential.” There was air always beating around him

---

\* Adrienne Clarkson was the 26th Governor General of Canada, from 1999-2005, and is the co-founder and co-chair of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship.

like invisible wings, never stillness. When you were talking with him, you always had that feeling that he listened to you with the most intense concentration, as if you really had something to say: his true force came from a profound humility and his generous regard for others.

He felt at home wherever he was — sleeping on an airport bench in Dar-es-Salaam or chatting with Mikhail Gorbachev. He moved with the rich and powerful but remained always at one with the poor and the helpless. He knew how to speak to wildly different people. At Stockholm, I witnessed a crazy, colourful dialogue between him and a man called Wavy Gravy, whose self-promoting contribution to the environmental movement was to appear daily dressed in ham: the ecological exhibitionist had made a costume from slices of honey-cured Virginia ham, which unfortunately turned green by the end of the 10 days. Maurice made a point of telling him that everybody on this planet would be saved, or no one would be saved. And, to those in the world who had money and status, he always continued saying that the Earth must be kept whole as an asset of natural capital, rather than being undermined continually.

What Maurice did in his life is astonishing. As his friend, I was a witness to his life, which is what true friendship means. I saw a man who had courage — and courage is the most important virtue as it is the one that underpins all the others. I saw his often-wicked use of humour, his contagious energy, and his belief in the spiritual. When he was in his 20s he wrote that "each person has a spark of the divine and that we should seek to always be in tune with that". This idealism, this vision, never left him, which is what kept him young, what made him great.

The essence of Maurice Strong is captured in Stephen Spender's poem:

*... of those who were truly great.  
Who, from the womb, remembered the soul's history  
Through corridors of light, where the hours are suns,  
Endless and singing...  
See how these names are fêted by the waving grass  
The names of those who in their life fought for life,  
Who wore at their hearts core the fire's centre.  
Born of the sun, they travelled a short while towards the sun  
And left the vivid air signed with their honour*

# Maurice Strong - A Global Citizen

Desai, Nitin\*

I first met Maurice Strong when I was inducted into the secretariat of the Brundtland Commission to bridge the gap that existed between the environment and development factions on the Commission. I was asked to support a group of Commissioners, which included Maurice Strong, Sridath Ramphal and Janez Stanovnik in order to find common ground and this led ultimately to the formulation of sustainable development as the policy goal. This is where my long and affectionate relationship with Maurice started. Later in 1990, when he was named as the Secretary-General of the Rio Earth Summit, he knew developing countries were the key to a successful outcome and hence he asked for me by name to serve as the Deputy Secretary-General of the Conference.

Maurice had a long standing connection with India. When he was preparing the Stockholm Conference, against the advice that he received, he came to Delhi to persuade Indira Gandhi to attend. He says that she heard him without uttering a word for 10 minutes or so and then agreed. She was about the only head of government other than the host country head, Olof Palme, to attend and her speech about poverty and pollution still resonates in the global discourse on the environment. His love for India was recognized when he was given the Jawaharlal Nehru Award for International Understanding in 1994.

In many ways this potted history of the origin of our connection typifies several things about Maurice – his realisation that global aims required a genuine global coalition, his capacity to identify people who fit in with his strategic aims, his capacity to work the

---

\* Nitin Desai, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, worked on organizing a series of global UN summits, the Rio Earth Summit (1992) as Maurice Strong's Deputy, the Copenhagen Social Development Summit (1995), the Monterrey Finance and Development Summit (2002) and the Johannesburg Sustainable Development Summit (2002).

system to get the mandates and people he wants. Later, when we were preparing for the Rio Conference I also saw his willingness to leave enough freedom to his deputies to do their work with the intergovernmental process while he focused on what he was best at- reaching out to political and corporate leaders, using the media to build momentum, engaging with NGOs.

In a very real sense Maurice Strong was a man of many parts. He pursued his global ends in his work with international organisations, his engagement with global networks of NGOs, his connections in and with the corporate world and in his activities in his native country: Canada.



MFS making a statement at the opening of UNCED, 3 June 1992

He believed firmly in the need for cooperation between countries and the role of the United Nations and its related institutions in promoting this cooperation. That is what lies behind the many different capacities in which he served the UN:

- as Secretary-General of the path breaking Stockholm Environment Conference and the Rio Earth Summit,
- as the first head of UNEP,
- as the leader of the UN's relief efforts in Africa during the great drought of the 80s,

- as the architect of the reforms undertaken by Kofi Annan when he took office,
- as the Rector of the UN University for Peace in Costa Rica,
- as a Special Representative charged with finding a peaceful way of resolving the problem posed by North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

But Maurice was not some run-of-the-mill international bureaucrat or careerist. In every responsibility he took on at the UN he moved far beyond set ways of functioning. His concern was not rules but impact. I benefited from this as a newcomer to the UN as it was nice to have a boss who never said "No, not allowed by the rules," if one convinced him that it would help the cause. He was also bold in his choice of advisers and brought in some extraordinary individuals into the UN process like getting Barbara Ward and Rene Dubois to write the seminal book *Only One Earth* for the Stockholm Conference.

Maurice was involved in diplomatic initiatives involving many different issues. Perhaps the one issue that was uppermost in his mind and where he made the greatest contribution was raising awareness and stimulating global and national action on crucial environmental challenges. At Stockholm he got governments to institutionalise national environmental management and at Rio he raised the issue to the highest level by getting over a hundred heads of government to commit to Agenda 21.

Maurice recognized the growing impact of corporate leaders, NGOs and media in shaping perceptions and, through that, on policy. In the process leading up to the Rio Earth Summit he used his formidable network of contacts and persuasive powers to bring them into the UN process in a much more visible and impactful way than ever before.

Maurice was a venturesome businessman and he moved effortlessly between public service and private industry. His familiarity with the world of business gave him the credibility in the eyes of corporate leaders. He catalysed the World Business Council for Sustainable Development for the Rio Summit by roping in some 20 odd high profile CEOs from around the world. Corporate engagement has grown steadily since then and at the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development it reached a scale where the participants numbered in the hundreds. Today

corporations are very important players in this space to a point where, in the United States, in response to the Trump administration's irresponsible policy on climate change, many corporations have announced their continued commitment to the goals agreed at the Paris Climate Summit in 2015. The role that Maurice played in this transformation of corporate attitudes to cooperative global action is one of his most important contributions to the global system.

If Maurice wooed corporate leaders because of the potential for ground level action they did promise, he sought a deeper engagement of NGOs because of the role they could play in shaping opinion in the public mind and amongst policy makers. For the Rio meeting he pushed hard and succeeded in opening the UN process to deeper engagement with NGOs and he put in as much effort to mobilise support for NGO participation as for the intergovernmental event.

Maurice himself played a leadership role in many global NGOs and focussed his energies on the Earth Council after the Rio Conference because he felt that moving forward from Rio could not be left to the diplomats in New York and would require the continued engagement of civil society. There was another reason for this. Maurice felt that global environmental action could not be based simply on finding common ground amongst competing national interests. It requires an ethical basis and that is why he mobilised Steven Rockefeller and others to formulate an *Earth Charter*.

Maurice understood well the growing impact and the potential of media. The spread of global TV networks was an important part of this and Maurice roped in a pioneer of this medium, Ted Turner, as a key supporter of this process. Maurice also played a key catalytic role in Ted Turner's subsequent actions in supporting the UN.

Maurice's approach to global action, particularly on long-term environmental issues, was far ahead of its time. Today we have a much better understanding of the complex distribution of global power between governments, large transnational corporations, opinion shaping inter-country NGO networks and media networks with global reach.

We are now seeing is the emergence of a sense of global community. Now it is not just foreign ministers who interact with

their counterparts in other countries. Ministers responsible for finance, trade and environment meet in global gatherings so frequently that the respect of their peers in other countries becomes nearly as important for them as of their national cabinet colleagues. This desire for global acceptability is even more important for corporate leaders in a world of interconnected global value chains. The NGO networks play an agenda-setting role because they bring into the diplomatic process an issue interest that remains distinct from simply a national interest. They have – more than governments – set the agenda for the environment. They have also strengthened a rights-based approach to global issues.

Values do matter because without a shared global ethic, key challenges before the world today will not be addressed. Slowly in fits and starts, and occasional setbacks, such an ethic is emerging. The great global conferences of the 90s, led by Rio, have been part of this process. A global community is emerging in the growing number of activists, academics, corporate leaders, media persons and even some politicians who are looking beyond national interest towards a global interest. Maurice Strong was a pioneer in this emerging global community as a committed internationalist who saw the world as his homeland. What mattered to him was the wellbeing of each and every country and every person on this our blue planet. That is why he was truly a global citizen.



The Staff of UNCED Secretariat in Conches, Geneva, 1992



# Maurice Strong

DiPerna, Paula\*

I first met Maurice strong in 1992 in his office at the United Nations in New York City, prior to his brainchild, the landmark Earth Summit, known forevermore as the Rio Conference. It was during the busy *run-up* but Maurice did not appear to be running at all. He was an island of calm in the face of the awesome and intimidating demands he faced as he tried to lead, organize, fund and inspire hundreds of people to stick with his dream. That day, he seemed focused on counting heads, literally heads of state, with the Rio conference on its way to being the largest single gathering of world potentates in world history.

At that point in the preparations, President George H.W. Bush of the United States had not yet committed to coming to Rio, but Maurice projected confidence. I met Maurice with Jacques Cousteau, with whom I worked as Vice-President of International Affairs at the time. Maurice gave Cousteau a simple assignment: "Please convince President Bush to come."

Cousteau and I went to the Oval Office twice on Maurice's errand – we could not let him down. In the end, Bush did go to Rio, even signing the Framework Convention on Climate Change, a document important enough then, but, as we now know, crucial to all the climate change agreements ever since, providing the very basic authority that made even the recent Paris agreement possible. In this sense, Maurice was a true father of the Paris Accord, surely a key part of his enduring legacy.

Maurice pulled off the Rio Conference with his masterful organizational skills, but also his belief in the universal power of the greater good. More global leaders heard his call to convene to

---

\* Paula DiPerna is Special Advisor for The Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP). She served formerly as President of CCX-International; President of the Joyce Foundation and Vice-President for International Affairs, The Cousteau Society.

face the twin challenges of environment and development than had responded to any such summons before.

Rio came off without any hitches to the eye, itself a cornucopia of styles, demands, needs, goals, objectives, sponsors, supporters, tastes, statements, invectives, posturing, grandstanding, celebrating and happening. Nothing like it had happened before, thanks to Maurice and his team, and to the quiet calm but utterly laser-like focus Maurice brought to the task – one step in front of the other, one hurdle up, one hurdle down.

Maurice broke through UN bureaucracy to insist that civil society be allowed to engage directly with negotiators, even join national negotiating delegations – and their presence surely helped make Rio a success. Today we take civil society participation for granted, but no one had raised it to such a global level of organization before Maurice. He brought private companies to the UN and perhaps even invented the idea of partnerships—so much used today. Much of the policy process we take for granted today began with Maurice.

Maurice Strong is truly deserving of the word *courageous* for the only thing he feared was not to move. He was a free hand conductor; mastering the vision of what was needed and then letting others play their parts, pulling excellence from them. He steered, cajoled, critiqued, gently, graciously but firmly – and when he got what he wanted, it was usually for the higher purpose for peace.

So where indeed would any global environmental issue be today if not for his original leadership? Nowhere.

It is almost hard to believe in today's instantaneous world that any task can be arduous, and not just zips along at the touch of the send button or swipe of an App, but every task that Maurice undertook to my knowledge because it was pioneering had to be arduous. And inch-by-inch, year-by-year, the world has gradually added its voice to his, and begun to put in place the institutions he was the first to have conceptualized.

Since Rio, I was lucky enough to interact with Maurice here and there, and continued to admire his surefooted way-finding, adding value always, pushing the envelope as they say, ruffling feathers now and then, leaving them ruffled if need be, smoothing them over when the time came.

One of my best memories of his focus and drive was at a meeting Maurice had pulled together with then President Collor of Brazil, Cousteau, to whom Maurice had granted the exclusive *all area* access, and me. Maurice convened us to try to find a way to convince George Bush, who had by then agreed to come to Rio, to also sign the Biodiversity Convention – Maurice did not want to leave this gap open if he could avoid it. Collor had fulltime protocol and podium duties at the conference, as did Maurice himself, but they found a few minutes to put heads together. In about 15 of those precious minutes, we four had crafted a co-gent argument. But Maurice, Collor and Cousteau were due at a lunch hosted by Ted Turner. I offered to type up our case in a let-ter that President Collor would then sign. Which is just what we did. They dined, I typed, and then Ambassador Azambuja, then the Brazilian ambassador to the US, came by my makeshift desk to pick up the note for his President to sign. I was told the letter did make its way to Laurence Eagleburger of the US State Department, who delivered it personally to President Bush on the tarmac on his stopover in Panama. Bush read the note but still did not come around to signing the Biodiversity Convention. One Convention was enough for him, and opposition at home was still way too strong. Had we been a day earlier, Bush might have been convinced. But the point is that Maurice never stopped trying – he pressed to the very last chance and gave his all, playing all his cards when it mattered. Maurice had a uniquely skilled dedication.

On a personal note, I was privileged by his personal courtesies to me, always, and support of the Chicago Climate Exchange, where he was a Board member, as we moved through the world trying to advance the idea of cap-and-trade and emissions trading which, again, Maurice had foreseen as important for climate change as early as 1992, when he invited economist Richard L. Sandor, one of the world's earliest practitioners of emissions trading and considered *the father of financial futures*, to come to Rio to speak about it. In China, Maurice Strong was an unfailing pillar of supreme wisdom and help, not to mention hospitality. There, with his wife, Hanne, in wild rainstorms or smoggy heat – always available, always hosting.

I feel so fortunate to have been able to witness the history Maurice Strong made. In today's world, where the future is tense

and courageous leaders few, where nations flail and violence flows, Maurice Strong's vision and example remains a gift to us, a standard we must always try to reach.

Maurice was ahead of his time, and his work infuses our every day.

Many claim to have changed the world for the greater good – Maurice Strong really did.



Talking about the Green Agenda

# The Father of Sustainable Development

Dodds, Felix\*

The Maurice Strong story is an amazing one.

As I was very focused in the 1980s on UK domestic politics my first awareness of Maurice was not until the preparations for the Rio Earth Summit. By then I was at the United Nations Association – UK organizing town hall conferences in preparation for the Summit and an Earth Summit Rally. To supplement this, we had asked Maurice to write an article for the magazine we were producing to be sold in WH Smiths in the UK and a free four-page tabloid that would be given out at the town hall meetings.

If you are not of that generation it is very difficult to properly understand the impact that the Earth Summit in 1992 had not only on key environmental issues but also on the opening up of the United Nations to stakeholders. It helped a lot, I think, that Maurice had already organized Stockholm in 1972 and served as Executive Director of UNEP – the first one – and been part of the Brundtland Commission. He had also been an industry leader as well as an NGO leader in the years after Stockholm. He knew how the intergovernmental world worked, knew the key issues that needed to be moved forward, knew the key players and was able to craft the right coalitions to deliver on these issues.

The preparations for the Earth Summit were very interesting. Unlike other UN Summits where the Secretary-General of the Conference would just meet with governments, Maurice met with media and stakeholders in addition to governments in each place he visited while on the road. This helped enormously to galvanize interest in the Summit. The Earth Summit outcomes were such an achievement to not only secure Agenda 21 – a blueprint for a sustainable planet, the Rio Declaration also a set of 27 princi-

---

\* Felix Dodds, Senior Fellow Global Research Institute, University of North Carolina.

ples to guide our work - but also two conventions on biodiversity and climate change. In his final statement to the conference Maurice said:

"On climate change, we have taken an historic first step, but only a first step - not a sufficient step. Stabilizing the gaseous composition of the atmosphere is clearly the most urgent problem we will face in the 1990s. Yet the agreement signed here sets neither targets nor timetables. You must now act quickly to bring the climate convention and its protocols in line with what scientists are telling us - that carbon emissions must be cut by at least 60 per cent just to put the global warming trend on hold. It is too late for protracted discussions and delay." (Strong 1992)

Being in Rio and caught up in the energy and belief that we had identified the problems and embarked on a clear journey to address them was an indescribably empowering moment.

The Summit would have been an incredible achievement with just these developments, but on top of these developments also emerged a new UN body to monitor Agenda 21: The Commission on Sustainable Development. Within two years, a third convention on desertification and a treaty on straddling fish stocks would be agreed upon and, by the end of the decade, negotiations would begin on two further conventions regarding persistent organic pollutants and prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade, respectively.

These developments meant so much in terms of progress for international environmental law, and they were all put into motion by the one and only Maurice Strong.

At the time, perhaps the least appreciated part of Agenda 21 were the nine chapters dealing with what were eventually termed the *Major Groups*. This had massive impacts over the following decades. On stakeholders, he was so clearly a visionary. He recognized that governments alone would not make the best policy but if you created space for stakeholders to input their ideas then governments would make better informed policy decisions and if you then engaged them in partnerships with each other and governments more of the decisions would be implemented. An example of this was the text in Chapter 28 on

local authorities which said: "Local authorities in each country should have undertaken a consultative process with their populations and achieved a consensus on 'a local Agenda 21' for the community." (UN, 1992)

Within ten years, over six thousand *local Agenda 21s* were created across the globe with local authorities acting as facilitators in working with their local stakeholders to imagine their communities becoming more sustainable. Maurice recognized that there were gaps in critical stakeholder groups, so in preparation for Rio, he had helped establish the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) in 1990 which brought together local authorities that wanted to work on sustainable development.

He was not impressed with the role the International Chamber of Commerce was playing at this time, and so he appointed Stephan Schmidheiny, a Swiss industrialist, as his Principal Adviser for Business and Industry. Schmidheiny was tasked with bringing in the progressive global business leaders. This resulted in late 1991 with Schmidheiny establishing a new organization: the Business Council for Sustainable Development. Hugh Faulkner was to be the Executive Director of the new organization; he defined the work of BCSD as to:

"solve the single most urgent problem that faces the human race today – that of preserving the environment for ourselves and for the generations to come." (Falkner, 1991) This brought the progressive CEOs into the Summit preparations.

The approach to stakeholders was subsequently picked up in the follow-up to the Earth Summit. By the ten-year review in 2002, over one hundred governments created multi-stakeholder commissions, committees or councils to develop and help implement Agenda 21. UN bodies were also reorganizing their engagement strategies around a stakeholder discourse as opposed to a civil society discourse. This was all due to Maurice's vision.

I didn't engage much with Maurice in the 1990s except around commentary on some of the reform activities he was spearheading for the UN Secretary-General.

We both spoke in September 2001 at the International Eminent Persons Meeting on Inter-Linkages in Tokyo on how to bridge the

problems and solutions to address sustainable development in preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. In our conversation, I remember him vividly promoting that it should address the emerging environmental security agenda. It was an agenda I had been aware of; in the Earth Summit 2002 book I edited, there was a chapter by Margaret Brusasco McKenzie on the subject. WSSD didn't address this agenda, but by the 2005 World Summit it was in the political discourse at a level never seen before. Water, Energy, Food or Climate Security, and Resilience stories were now common in the news media. Again, Maurice was ahead of his time.

In 2009, IUCN hosted an 80<sup>th</sup> birthday party for Maurice in preparation for the Copenhagen Climate Summit and the possibility of a Rio+20. He reminded everyone that he had raised the issue climate change a long time ago:

„If you look at the agenda of the first world environment conference, the UN Conference on what we called the 'Human Environment,' which was held in 1972 in Stockholm, most of the issues we are discussing were there. Of course, they had varying degrees of priority and interest. In my opening speech at Stockholm, I cited climate change as one of the key issues. Nobody was really listening. It was not seen as it is seen now, with a sense of urgency. We thought it was a long-term issue and we didn't get much action about the issue." (Strong, 2009)

My memories of that event were discussing in the margins with Maurice and Andrew Steer, who was then Director General at the UK Department of International Development (DFID), the idea of Maurice again being Secretary-General for a UN Conference – Rio+20. It wasn't going to happen, but he would be able to play a supporting role throughout. In preparation for Rio+20, Michael Strauss and I had the pleasure of working with Maurice on the book *Only One Earth: The Long Road via Rio to Sustainable Development*. The book told the intergovernmental story from before Stockholm to the final preparations for Rio+20. Our hope was for the book to highlight the successes, but at the same time provide a realistic assessment of the failures. In particular, we reminded readers that the dialogue on sustainable development happens in a world where peace and security issues tend to trump (no pun intended) any progression on sustainable development.



Maurice would play an important role in helping to mobilize interest in Rio+20. Like Copenhagen, he was disappointed with the outcome from Rio+20. However, without Rio+20 there would never have been Paris or the Sustainable Development Goals. In his final remarks to the UN General Assembly in 2014 at a President of the UN General Assembly High Level Event (the remarks had to be delivered in writing as he was not well enough to attend), he was, as always, challenging:

“Many of you in this room today will play a significant role in what will be achieved or not. We live in a time of great challenges on so many fronts that sometimes the issues we talk about today are lost in the noise of war and peace. But there are also great opportunities with building an inclusive and green economy that will bring jobs and a cleaner and more sustainable planet.

The roadmap that started in Stockholm, continued in Rio and Johannesburg and in Rio-20 must now become a reality. Our essential unity as peoples of the Earth must transcend the differences and difficulties, which still divide us. You are called upon to rise to your historic responsibility as custodians of the planet in taking the decisions in the next year that will unite rich and poor, North, South, East and West, in a new global partnership to ensure our common future. I ask you to work together to make it such for your time has come to make those changes.” (Strong 2014)

In the final analysis, all that can be asked of us is whether or not we tried to contribute to make the planet a better place for the next generation to live in.

In the case of Maurice Strong – the father of sustainable development – there is no question he inspired us all to do more, he cajoled us when we were faltering, he berated us when we were going in the wrong direction. He kept us on the path or as close to the path towards a more sustainable world and for that we should all rejoice in being part of the life and times of Maurice Strong. I know I do.

“Indeed, it has never been more important to heed the evidence of science that time is running out in our ability to manage successfully our impacts on the Earth’s environment, biodiversity, resource and life-support systems on which human

life as we know it depends. We must rise above the lesser concerns that pre-empt our attention and respond to the reality that the future of human life on Earth depends on what we do, or fail to do in this generation." (Strong 2012)

## **References:**

Strong, M. (1992) Speech at the end of Earth Summit. Available on line at the Maurice Strong website: <http://www.maurices-strong.net/>

Strong, M. (2009) Speech at the IUCN 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary party for Maurice Strong – the Strong Dialogues: Available on line at the Maurice Strong website: <http://www.mauricestrong.net/>

Strong, (2012) from speech in preparation for Rio+20. Available on line at the Maurice Strong website: <http://www.maurices-strong.net/>

Strong, M. (2014) Speech to the PGA High Level Event on the Sustainable Development Goals. Available on line at the Maurice Strong website: <http://www.mauricestrong.net/>

United Nations (1992) Chapter 28 of Agenda 21, UN, New York. Available online: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/Agenda21.pdf>

# A Man for All Seasons

Dowdeswell, Elizabeth\*

I cannot remember when I first met Maurice Strong. I do know that from the moment I started to work in the environmental domain he seemed to be ever present, if not in person, then certainly in spirit. In retrospect his influence on domestic and international institutions, policies, programs and ways of thinking has been formidable.

Perhaps the seminal moment was the Earth Summit in 1992 – an organizational feat orchestrated by this man of vision, persistence, remarkable energy and an extensive network. If the first UN Conference on the Environment in Stockholm in 1972 put the environmental issue on the world agenda, Rio was about embracing the concept of sustainable development. World leaders asked us to imagine real improvements in the health of the environment, a more equitable sharing of the earth's resources and a much-improved quality of life for more of the planet's people. Bringing together environmental, economic and social considerations promised much improved decisions.

And for several decades now that legacy has driven the world community to hold regular policy conferences on the implementation of sustainable development. Even the results of negotiations on financing at Monterey, on trade at Doha and various multilateral environmental agreements were examined anew in the context of an integrated sustainable development agenda. On every occasion Maurice was there to bear witness on behalf of the environment and an equitable world.

We have discovered how messy and difficult integration is. The expectations of many have not yet been met and targets and

---

\* Elizabeth Dowdeswell was invested as Ontario's 29th Lieutenant Governor on September 23, 2014. Her public service career has spanned provincial, federal, and international borders, and disciplinary and sectoral lines. She was Executive Director of UNEP, 1993-1998.

schedules remain elusive, but there has been a positive reaffirmation of multilateralism. We can demonstrate that we have moved beyond Rio, stumbling at times, but nonetheless moving forward. We are increasingly aware of the threats to our biological and life-support systems. After Paris, climate change is firmly on the agenda and attainment of the UN's ambitious 17 Sustainable Development Goals is being actively pursued.

The Earth Summit was also prologue to the future for the young organization UNEP. It was a turning point. To shape the powerful forces of globalization and harness the potential of interdependence required a shift toward greater integration of environmental stewardship, inclusive economic prosperity and social equity. Maurice's care and nurturing of the organization he had designed never ceased. Upon asking, I was the recipient of his stories of the early days and his wise comment and advice about the thorny issue of global environmental governance.

Reflecting on that topic at a forum in Switzerland in 2009, the present and former Executive Directors of UNEP recounted the innumerable meetings, the piles of analytical documents and the powerful speeches that had made the case that a reinvention of the world's environmental governance structure was required if we were to respond appropriately to symptoms of a world in wobbly disequilibrium with fast-paced technological change and growing economic interdependence.

The phrase "tipping point" was used to warn us that this juxtaposition of the challenges of alleviating poverty, reversing environmental degradation and shaping globalization demanded our best efforts. Ultimately, mutual interdependence meant mutual vulnerability.

Inevitably, those present sought out the insights of Maurice. Acknowledging that sustainable development remained largely theoretical for the majority of the world's people, he reinforced the role of UNEP as an anchor of our global environmental actions. He envisioned a strengthened and resilient UNEP that was respected and authoritative; that demonstrated competence and achieved real results; that in partnership made a valuable and recognized contribution to the work of others and to meeting the needs of both member states and citizens.

Maurice's mode of operation involved impeccable logic, patience, inclusivity and always persuasion. While transformation to tackle fragmentation, proliferation of institutional arrangements and achieve policy coherence was required, he understood that structural change might be desirable, but without agreement on common purpose it would not automatically provide the answer. UNEP could not be all things to all people. It was part of a multi-layered system that should be mutually reinforcing. Changing the architecture of the governance regime was not an end in itself but rather the means to an end of accountability and results. Based on his accumulated wisdom, experience and motivation his thoughts remain as relevant today as they were more than a decade ago.

Although he did not say so explicitly, I was left in no doubt that his vision for environmental stewardship and a broader ethical and spiritual framework of justice, solidarity, respect and a rebalancing of power relationships drove sustainable development. Moral and ethical principles were articulated clearly in the Earth Charter. Maurice was convinced that our common humanity was more important than our differences and that we could share a similar worldview.

There is another dimension to Maurice's vision for humanity, one shaped by indigenous peoples. Upon rereading his story, in *Where on Earth Are We Going?* I found glimpses of that profound influence on his life. This year, 2017, we celebrate 150 years of Confederation in Canada. Simultaneously we are engaged in genuine dialogue about the future we want. That includes a commitment to reconciliation with indigenous peoples. Forging a renewed partnership will require soul-searching, deep reflection and collective courage.

There is no more important conversation than how we will live together – sustainably and equitably: how we can reimagine a country that is true to its values and strong in its diversity. Maurice would have made such a contribution to our national journey. This world needs thinking, caring and ethical human beings who have a sense of responsibility for those with whom they live and the environment in which they live. In Maurice, the world had such a public servant. He was not a mere observer of life passing, but a living example that one person can make a difference. Thank you, Mr. Strong.

# Our Maurice Strong

Engfeldt, Lars-Göran\*

The legacy of Maurice Strong is a powerful inspiration for the generation now in charge of the destiny of our home planet. Maurice Strong commanded exceptional political and moral authority in upholding a vision of the human race living in equity, and in harmony with the surrounding biosphere. This included his steadfast and strong support of multilateral cooperation. He convinced hesitant poor countries to be actively engaged, and pleaded that industrialized countries in their own self-interest should assist them generously to meet the challenges of sustainable development. Two outstanding examples, which I witnessed at close hand, were his remarkable performance in the two seminal processes of preparing, and managing the United Nations Conferences on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972 and on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

He tirelessly fulfilled his vital global role for close to half a century in many other influential functions in the public and business sectors, as well as in civil society. He managed to inspire a very significant normative progress without which the task of confronting the difficult continuing challenges such as the climate crisis would have been all but impossible. During these turbulent and uncertain times his example remains more significant than ever.

He was highly motivated from the outset. In his memoirs, he wrote of his rising concerns about air and water pollution in Canada in the 1960s and his increasing awareness on the whole for environmental issues. This included the environmental and

---

\* Lars-Göran Engfeldt, Swedish liaison officer in the secretariat of the 1972 Stockholm Conference, and Special Adviser to Maurice Strong at 1992 Rio Conference. He was Sweden's Permanent Representative to UNEP 1993 – 1998 and Environment Ambassador 1998 – 2002.

social disruption caused by some Canadian-supported infrastructure projects in developing countries. He wrote a letter to Barbara Ward – Lady Jackson – on the occasion of the publication of her book *Space Ship Earth* in 1966 stating: "My own greatest aspiration at this point is to be able to do something to put into operation some of the ideas and the ideals that you have done so much to inspire."

Maurice Strong was endowed with personal qualities that made him uniquely suited for the key future role he was going to play. This included an extraordinary vitality, excellent organizational skills and impeccable political judgments. He combined vision and courage with mastery of the art of the possible. Two characterizations of him have captured the essence of his unusual personality – a *pragmatic* and *active* pragmatist." To this should also be added his own very special personal quality of always remaining a true friend to each one, regardless of time and circumstance.

In multilateral negotiations he consistently applied his overall formula: *the process is the policy*. His first point of departure concerned the preparatory process undertaken before important events that were seen as important as their actual results. The second was that he would exercise leadership to the maximum extent possible in a given political setting. This meant promoting constant interaction between the substantive and political aspects of an issue. This aim – which was most often fulfilled – was to increase the quality and level of consensus gradually, so that the process itself would produce a satisfactory result to all. He has summed up some of these experiences with the words: "*never to confront but to co-opt, never to bully but to equivocate and never to yield.*"

He entered the global environmental scene at a defining moment in 1970 when I met him for the first time. He was then appointed Secretary-General of the Stockholm Conference. I was the responsible officer in the Swedish UN Mission since 1968 for this new agenda item regarding the environment. Sweden had successfully played the pioneering role initiating and then politically anchoring the process in the years before. In the summer of 1970 preparations for the Conference were in disarray because of the ineptitude of the UN Secretariat. As Maurice Strong took over the leadership in the fall, he restored confidence at an



MFS with King Gustav VI Adolf and UN Secretary-General Kurt Waldheim, at UNCHE welcoming ceremony, 5 June 1972

informal meeting of the Preparatory Committee with extraordinary skill and delicacy.

I can clearly remember the magical atmosphere in the conference room, a very rare occurrence in the UN. A few months later, Maurice Strong established the Conference secretariat in Geneva. I was privileged to serve as the Swedish liaison officer. Maurice Strong played the key role that enabled the Stockholm Conference to achieve action-oriented political agreements at the highest global level in dealing with the new cross-sectorial issue of the environment. In so doing, the Conference established a point of reference and authority for all future international work in the field of environment.

He spearheaded innovative negotiation techniques to advance the preparatory process. Among his major feats was the Founex initiative, which cleared the way for developing country participation in Stockholm, his handling of the hostile specialized agencies of the UN, the early contacts with China and his masterminding of the institutional follow-up of the Conference. As the first Executive Director of the United Nations Environment



Programme (UNEP), he started to adapt the new organization to the reality of the accelerating global environmental crisis.

I also had a close interaction with Maurice Strong during the Rio preparatory process. At that time, I was Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN, and had an informal role as one of his Special Advisers as Secretary-General of the Conference. The results of Rio laid the basis for today's order of multilateral negotiation, and included Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and the conventions on climate and biological diversity and, later, de-certification. Thanks to the skillful leadership of the Preparatory Committee, Agenda 21 became a fully intergovernmental-negotiated agreement, which remains an indisputable yardstick for the transition to sustainable development. This followed on the groundbreaking report of the Brundtland Commission of which Maurice Strong was a member.

Time was not right in Rio for the Earth Charter, a proposed set of ethical principles to guide the transition towards a more just, sustainable, and peaceful world. After a wide-ranging



MFS shows to UN Secretary-General U Thant design for official poster for UN-CHE, 15 September 1971.

consultation process, Maurice Strong managed in 2000 to transform the Earth Charter project into a major civil society initiative which now has millions of followers throughout the world.

It was through such personal efforts and the assistance of his own worldwide network of high level contacts, that the Rio Conference became a summit. He organized a memorable, special event where most world leaders, accompanied by only one adviser each, were seated around a single table. There they were reminded of their historical responsibility for the follow-up of the major decisions taken at Rio.

He set up first-class conference secretariats that were essential to the success both in Stockholm and Rio. In the Rio process he successfully handled the Byzantine UN bureaucracy, and was able to neutralize attempts by influential governments to reduce the impact of the Conference by allocating an insufficient budget for the preparations.

Maurice Strong used unconventional methods, but never broke any rule. Through his wide-ranging experiences in different walks of life, Maurice Strong developed a holistic worldview, which was unusual at the time. He saw the environmental issues, including climate challenge, as parts of a systemic whole closely linked to development. He can be credited with the groundbreaking involvement of science, civil society and the business sector in policy development on environment and sustainable development. This started already in the preparations for Stockholm and has taken up an ever-growing importance since then. At the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002, it was clearly recognized that governments alone couldn't drive the sustainable development agenda.

This fundamental transformation now underpins the new sustainable development goals of the UN, and the crucial Paris accord on climate in 2015. Maurice Strong consistently worked for a stronger UN. He early on saw the drawbacks of its fragmented structure in the field of development and proposed a merger of bodies that would include also UNEP. He argued – already in the 1970s – for the establishment of a UN Charter body for the global common goods. At regular intervals, he forcefully called for action to fill this extremely dangerous void in multilateral cooperation, unfortunately to no avail. Only recently has the

widespread destruction of the oceans started to be recognized as one of humanity's most vital challenges.

In 2010 he said in an interview that analytically he was pessimistic the world would be able to make the necessary changes in time, yet being an eternal optimist he did add: "*But operationally, I'm optimistic because I believe that it is still possible.*"

In his last public message, Maurice Strong called for a forceful climate agreement in Paris in 2015 in the realization that the future of life on earth depends on what we do, or not do, in this generation. He would not witness the successful conclusion of these negotiations, but his spirit is very much present as the follow-up is now being challenged by the announced withdrawal of the USA from the accord. The transformation of international and national practices, and the many other contributions of his legacy should remain powerful tools to keep such processes on a steadfast and determined future course.



Indira Gandhi addressing Stockholm Conference, 14 June 1972, with Maurice Strong in the front row

# Maurice Strong, in memoriam

Galtung, Johan\*

Yes, Maurice, you remain strong! in our memory. I see you for my inner eye in Cocoyoc, 1974, with Gamani Corea from UNCTAD. You were a forerunner, breaking out of the economical strait-jacket of growth-growth-growth into *another development*, focused on the two absolutes we have: Nature and Humans. Of course, we need economic activity, production-distribution of goods and services-consumption. But not at the expense of nature and human-kind; only in order to enhance them.

As the head of newly founded UNEP, *nature* was your task, but you never lost sight of the broader perspective. And you followed up, long after your retirement from UNEP, keeping a well-informed watch on what happened, participating, warning and giving ideas.

On top of all of this there was a very human Maurice, to his many friends a very good friend. We shared a very dear friend, also a strong fighter for another development, also rooted in an accommodating United Nations: Marc Nerfin, with his institute near Geneva. We often met there. Marc withdrew to Paris with his Jamaican wife, you kept an eye on him as his health deteriorated, and kept us all informed and encouraged.

Your background from a small country not doing much damage, neither to nature nor to humans, to be on the defensive helped. A truly pluralistic federation for everyone to feel at home – more or less, some might say, but by and large – this background helped you a lot. There was much of Canada exuding from you, at the political, economic, cultural, social and human levels. Hence, our deep gratitude to you also goes to the country that produced you.

---

\* Johan Galtung is founder of the discipline of peace and conflict studies. He wrote the first draft of the Cocoyoc Declaration adopted at the 1974 UNCTAD/ UNEP Symposium on Patterns Resource Use, Environment and Development Strategies.

Of course, we are sorry you are no longer with us to inspire us, but above all we are grateful for all you have done. Nobody lasts forever, but you live on, Strong on ideas in our brains, and as a very human Maurice in our hearts. Thanks, and thanks again for all you gave to us.



Speaking at Swedish Academy

# Maurice F. Strong: A historic figure in the UN and in the North-South development saga

Gosovic, Branislav\*

It was in 1971 that I joined the UNCTAD Secretariat, a time of tense North-South relations that followed the 1964 UN Conference on Trade and Development, which saw the birth of the Group of 77 and elevated the issues of economic development to a central place on the UN agenda. In early 1972, I attended UNCTAD III in Santiago, when I had misgivings vis-à-vis the UN Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE), scheduled to take place in Stockholm a few weeks later. In this, I shared the opinion common among developing countries and in development circles, which were unhappy with how the problem was formulated under the influence of the developed countries.

However, my attitude began to change after UNCHE, its balanced outcomes and the influential voice the developing countries had in its deliberations, and, especially, when the UN General Assembly took a decision to locate the new organization, the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), in Nairobi. The decision, I felt, would contribute to highlighting the development dimension and the developing countries' concerns in the organization's proceedings and future work.

Thus, when Maurice F. Strong, as the newly appointed Executive Director of UNEP, approached me to join his team, upon the recommendation of Michael Zammit Cutajar of the UNCHE Secretariat, I agreed enthusiastically. It was a privilege for me to be part of that pioneering UN international undertaking and I was,

---

\* Branislav Gosovic was on UNEP secretariat staff in Nairobi (1973-1981), and, on secondment from UNECLAC, on the staff of WCED (1985-6). See author's "Maurice Strong, Marc Nerfin, Pope Francis' Laudato si', SDGs and COP 21".

especially, happy to be given the opportunity to live in Africa and the Third World. In 1973, I left UNCTAD to join the UNEP Secretariat. At first, my duties kept me in external relations, but I was soon deployed to a newly created division dealing with economic and social issues. This opened a whole new vista for me. It represented a fresh start in my fledgling UN career and helped to orient and focus my professional and academic interests. By inviting me to join UNEP, Maurice Strong, with whom I maintained a close and warm relationship for decades, until the very end of his remarkable life, committed me to a singular career path of continuous learning and exposure to global problems, of political and professional engagement for higher causes of humankind, and of personal and intellectual fulfilment.

\*

As the title of my tribute implies, for me Maurice F. Strong was a unique personality and actor in the decades-long UN North-South development tussle and, indeed, in the chronicle of the United Nations itself. He played a key and leading role in the efforts to conceptualize, in a holistic, integrated and equitable way, the new *environment* challenge that was thrust in the late 1960s on the international agenda by Sweden, including in its efforts to broaden the initially selective and sector-approach that was evolving in the North. Strong's grasp of the complex issues at stake, his political sensitivity and acumen, and his skill in steering the process in an antagonistic and inflammatory setting were remarkable. They shielded the Stockholm Conference from a most likely North-South impasse and confrontation. They secured the engagement of the developing countries and the adoption by the Conference of a framework and package of measures and the underlying principles that offered a solid basis and hope for future cooperation.

The story I heard of how the young, starry-eyed Maurice Strong first came to the newly established United Nations to offer his services in the interest of the noble causes of international cooperation was prophetic. After considering his CV and modest educational background, the UN personnel office deployed him to security and guard duties, which he did not carry out for very long. When leaving, as this story goes, he told his co-workers that one day, "after I make my first million," he would return to lead the Organization. This was the quintessential and

always restless Maurice Strong. This episode in his life reflected his two passions, 1) his dedication to public service and high global causes and 2) his life-long involvement in the world of business and entrepreneurship. He used his success in the latter as a key for entry and an influential role, at the highest level, in national and international political life.

After his first assignment in the UN, he proceeded to devote his youthful enthusiasm and energies to business endeavours and the market place. Among other things, he had a stint in deploying Caltex petrol pumps in East Africa. This African field experience gave him a taste of the then Third World, one still under the colonialist and imperialist yoke. It apparently imbued him with his lifelong empathy for and identification with the developing countries, their causes and common aspirations. His Canadian *prairie-socialist* roots and experiences, including his time with indigenous communities in the Canadian North, also figured centrally in his worldview, which steadily evolved during his successful foray into the business and finance world, and was further honed in his public service activities in Canada, including his tenure in CIDA, where his charisma and leadership qualities excelled.

Thus, when the preparatory process for the Stockholm Conference stalled, and the first head of the Conference Secretariat did not prove to be up to the complex and politically demanding task, Maurice Strong was the providential saviour to take over. Coming from Canada, at a time belonging to the so-called "like-minded group" of developed countries of a similar socio-democratic hue, whose leaders, personified by Olof Palme of Sweden and Pierre Trudeau of Canada, were relatively responsive to the developing countries' needs and favourable to the international development agenda, Maurice Strong's background made him an excellent choice. As a very successful businessman and prominent public personality from an important developed country, he enjoyed the North's confidence and support. His outlook on development problems and his engaging personality also made him acceptable to the developing countries, many of which were adverse to the early "environment" agenda that they perceived as mainly pertaining to pollution and, thus, being of interest to the industrialized developed countries alone.



The first crucial challenge was to deal with the developing countries' skepticism and often hostility to the new subject and to assure their attendance at the Conference and their constructive participation in its proceedings. The solution was the organizing in 1971 of the landmark Founex Panel of Experts on Development and Environment, with the view of broadening the definition and scope of the environment *problématique* and having the development dimension and the developing countries' perspective and concerns taken into account. The Panel's Report broadened the conceptual foundations for the Conference, helped to secure the developing countries' participation and generated their interest in the redefined subject matter. For this task, Maurice Strong engaged civil society and relied on the intellectual and political support of distinguished experts and personalities from both the South and the North, ones familiar with the development challenges and reasons for the developing countries' reservations and suspicion vis-à-vis the initial North-defined concept of the new undertaking.

The Founex Panel's conclusions and policy framework and the developing countries' presence and involvement influenced both the documentation for and the outcomes of the Conference. In brief, the development dimension was now reflected, including some issues on the UN development agenda over which the North and the South were at odds following the establishment of UNCTAD and UNIDO.

The outcome of UNCHE gave rise to hope that improved cooperation between the South and the North would now be possible, with the developing countries embracing the environmental objectives dear to the North, while the developed countries, in return, would act positively and cooperatively on the outstanding hard-core economic and financial issues figuring in the stalled North-South development dialogue. The decision to base the headquarters of the new environment organization in a Third World country was expected to provide an added impetus in this direction by exposing governments and the UNEP Secretariat to Africa's environment-development situation and problems faced by developing countries.

At the first session of the UNEP Council of Representatives in Geneva in early 1973, a North-South cleavage appeared in the debates and decisions concerning the draft programme, including

to which subject areas to allocate the financial resources that would be available in the Environment Fund. Realizing that statements by and views of individual developing countries could not affect the outcome, the Group of 77 coalesced and began to function midway in the Council proceedings. This changed the dynamics of the Council's first session and imparted greater importance to the developing countries' development priorities, including those concerning human settlements. The developed countries were irked by this change and objected to the emergence of G77, arguing that "group politics of UNCTAD" were not appropriate for UNEP.

As the Executive Director of the new organization in the making, Maurice Strong also had to respond to the changing priorities and to accommodate the newly energized and better-organized developing countries. To this end, the UNEP Secretariat's Economic and Social Division was entrusted to Vicente Sanchez of Chile, who had played a key role in mobilizing and organizing the Group of 77 at the first, opening session of the Council. The presence of the South's point of view within the leading echelon of the UNEP Secretariat was thus strengthened, with Mostafa Tolba of Egypt, an important developing-country figure at UNCHE, already in the post of UNEP Deputy Executive Director.

UNEP was now well positioned to respond to the formation of OPEC, to the rise of oil prices, which acted as a shock and represented an entirely new and pressing dimension in the world economy and North-South relations, and to the growing worldwide public concern over the finiteness of non-renewable natural resources, concern triggered by the oil crisis and the Club of Rome *Limits to Growth* Report. Maurice Strong did so by organizing – together with Gamani Corea of Sri Lanka, the Secretary-General of UNCTAD, a leading UN development organization that actively supported the Group of 77 – the 1974 Cocoyoc Symposium on Patterns of Natural Resource Use, Environment and Development Strategies.

This was politically a daring venture on the part of Strong, which he undertook with the support of his staff and advisers, including a group of world-renowned personalities who were involved in the preparatory work for the Symposium. The Cocoyoc Symposium was a natural follow-up to the Founex Panel and UNCHE. It rode on the crest of the South's new self-confidence and

optimism, engendered by the OPEC action, the Sixth Special Session of the UN General Assembly on New International Economic Order (NIEO) and related initiatives by the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and the G77, and by the widespread feeling that global systemic change and a new era in North-South relations were on the way.

Indeed, the Cocoyoc Declaration, which, among other things, called for changes in patterns of production and consumption and lifestyles, caused dismay and anger, especially in the United States. It represented a challenge to the very essence of the existing order of global capitalism and imperialism. It relied on the "soft power" of environmental objectives and related urgencies embraced by the developed countries, and on the underlying cause-effect rationale and the rationale of everything being interrelated in the global system. UNEP and Strong were promptly censored on account of the Cocoyoc Declaration, but the "genie was out of the bottle" and the questioning of the very essence of the existing system, with the help of the "ecological" catalyst, became an integral part of international discourse in the UN system.

Maurice Strong, hand-in-hand with Marc Nerfin of Switzerland, skilfully led and spearheaded the process that generated Founex, UNCHE and Cocoyoc. These three events formed the basis and projected a vision of a different world order needed to respond to multiple global challenges and their causes in order to meet the exigencies of the environment-development nexus. The latter offered the pretext for opening to international scrutiny some sensitive issues and highlighting their linkages and their common root causes.

Twenty years after the Stockholm Conference, in 1992, the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) met in Rio. It was another milestone in the evolving process in the UN, which launched and popularized the now commonplace concept of "sustainable development". Maurice Strong was once more at the helm, brought back from the world of national and business affairs for a new UN assignment that he orchestrated and steered together with Nitin Desai of India, with whom he had shared the experience and played a leading role in the labours of the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED).

Once again, following Strong's initial prompting of the Group of 77 in the midst of the Rio preparatory process, and thanks to the pressures coming from the developing countries, UNCED launched yet another fundamental concept for dealing with global challenges, encompassed in the Agenda 21, *the concept of common but differentiated responsibilities*. The North resisted it, because it highlighted the special responsibility of the developed countries for the implementation of Agenda 21, and evoked their ecological debt to humankind and the Earth.

Founex, UNCHE, Cocoyoc and UNCED are the historic and lasting legacies of Maurice Strong and all who had worked with him in these endeavours. He was given the opportunity to lead and shape the foundations of this decades-long process in the United Nations, a process dealing with the subject and challenges of far-reaching importance for nature, the future and, indeed, very existence of human society. It was the beginning, or dawn of global awareness of and concern for these fundamental issues, which have been forced on the reluctant establishment, dominant world system and admissible politico-economic discourse. Significantly, the subject matter was of interest to and involved people everywhere, who experienced it in different ways in their daily lives.

This process also brought to light the fact that at the core of the environmental crisis were then, as they keep on being today, the North-South, development-underdevelopment and rich-poor divides, the very nature of the existing order, the historical legacy, and, importantly, the lifestyles and production and consumption patterns of the developed countries that have been projected, radiated and adopted worldwide.

The environmental/ecological/developmental imperative is of common and shared interest and concern to the whole of humankind, and transcendental vis-à-vis the fray and national and particular interests and pursuits. It continues to offer a means and catalyst for advancing, step by step, in the quest for solutions and approaches for breaking out of the existing systemic, vicious circle that humanity is ensnared in.

From the very beginning in Stockholm in 1972, the frail edifice, which has patiently been built and solidified over the years through multilateral efforts, has been resisted, undermined and

defied by the same status-quo forces and actors in the North, especially in the superpower, forces and actors that head, control, participate in and benefit from the existing system. Some belonging to this affiliation or, indeed, class, who considered *the millionaire businessman Maurice Strong as one of their own* because he made his fortune in their midst and relying on methods pursued in, opportunities offered by, and networks established in the corporate world and business affairs, saw him as a "renegade" or indeed a "traitor to their cause" in his internationalist UN roles. It is not surprising that today some that belong to these same social circles have played a major role in the ongoing drive to reject and negate the very basis and rationale – scientific, social, political, economic, ecological, cultural and philosophical – that has crystallized over the decades following the Stockholm Conference and that has made it possible to arrive at and sustain the overarching international consensus on climate change.

The seeds of the understanding implied in the 1974 Cocoyoc Declaration and more recently in the Papal encyclical *Laudato Si'*, which highlighted the need for a holistic approach to problems besetting the world community, were planted thanks to the breakthroughs made on the global agenda in the 1960s and 1970s. This process was initiated when the existing world system and order were challenged by the rise of the Third World and the developing countries' collective efforts to overcome centuries of colonialism and imperialism. In their drive, the developing countries enjoyed support of the then East and of many in the West who were, like Maurice Strong, favourably disposed to a new age of "peace, development and environment".

This opening was grasped by a farsighted few who managed to shepherd, through the UN intergovernmental process, a conceptual and policy framework that has become firmly embedded in the domain of political theory and public discourse. It is reflected in a growing public and civil society consciousness worldwide and in national actions in many countries. It is one of the priorities in the work of the United Nations system, and has been internalized in the mindset and behaviour of individuals. It represents a foundation stone in the global struggle for systemic change, emancipation and the overcoming of flaws that

characterize the existing world order and put at risk both humankind and the Earth.

Maurice Strong was a pioneer and an exceptional offshoot of the world of business. He devoted his talents, knowledge, and resources to public causes via intergovernmental processes and through the paramount institution humanity has, the United Nations. Unlike in the early period, when Strong appeared on the world stage, today a number of his business billionaire kinsfolk, mostly from the "south of the border", have become prominent in global affairs, including through philanthropy for "humanitarian" causes via the UN system, filling some gaps in the inadequate funding available to the international organizations concerned and priority programmes on the agenda.

Such private initiatives, drawing on astronomical fortunes and windfall profits amassed and made possible by the design and workings of the existing highly inequitable and exploitative world economic and financial system and monopoly positions, although positive in declared intent and outcomes, bypass the intergovernmental process, undermine the democratic nature of the UN, and add new dimensions to the existing North-South divide. Privatization of international organizations is advancing, spearheaded by a handful of giant transnational corporations, which covet to influence and shape global regimes and multilateral cooperation and to secure an influential position for themselves in global processes.

What is of special concern is that some who belong to the so-called *0.1% club* are using their economic clout for securing critical government positions and determining national policy of key developed countries, also as a more efficacious way of exerting influence and shaping policy directions and outcomes in the global arena. By effectively fusing government and corporate domains, this trend, which was first noted half a century ago when the notion of the "military-industrial complex" was coined, has evolved into a much more powerful "government, military, industry-corporate, financial, media amalgam". It has a global vision and global tentacles and is interconnected, facilitated and coordinated via the use of the most advanced S&T and ICT as the cutting edge. It is backed by think tanks which provide the intellectual fodder in the ongoing struggle of ideas, paradigms and information in the world arena.

How to respond to these developments and trends, the invasion and infiltration of the extremely powerful corporate and private actors and moneyed interests into public sphere and multilateral process, and their osmosis with governments in some major countries, is a challenge for humanity, international cooperation and the United Nations. It calls for the awareness and response of the international community.

As for Maurice Strong, through his global leadership role and lasting contribution via the United Nations, he played a pioneering role in the evolution and charting of the desirable course. Despite the current adversities sweeping the world, brought about by those same structural causes and actors at the root of the planetary "ecological crisis", signaled at the Stockholm Conference some 50 years ago, one hopes that the essence of the vision that emerged then and through continuing work and efforts evolved since will continue to be an inspiration and a driving force in the strivings of the progressive humankind for a just and equitable world order through enlightened, multilateral cooperation in the United Nations.



9 November 1970, Strong speaking at an informal meeting of the Preparatory Committee when he restored confidence in the Stockholm Conference process

It should not be forgotten and bears repeating that this process was first launched by the developing countries in their quest for political liberation, development, and political and economic independence. Also, that they today have a major political responsibility in maintaining the momentum, especially the leading developing countries that can provide the global leadership needed to reshape the world system in the image that was projected in the 1974 Cocoyoc Declaration.

Maurice F. Strong continues as a solitary and rather unique figure originating in the world of business, one who not only spanned the public and business spheres, but also worked for global public interest and was an activist *engagé* in championing structural changes in the dominant man-made system.

He deserves a distinguished place in a pantheon of internationalist personalities of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as one who provided enlightened and farsighted global leadership via the United Nations and made a lasting and major contribution to the struggle for a better world at a time when there was a political window of opportunity for that kind of thinking to evolve and crystallize in the UN system.



# Coming across Maurice Strong for over 40 years

Graisse, Jean-Jacques\*

Unlike others who will contribute to this homage I never had the chance to work very closely with Maurice, but my UN career gave me many opportunities to be with and meet him.

I was at the European Office of UNDP in 1971, in the Palais des Nations, when a breath of fresh air, dynamism and excitement swept over the dull corridors of the Palais. Maurice Strong and his team had initiated a new adventure for the United Nations. He surrounded himself with some of the best brains in the international community. He challenged them into bringing forward new ideas in the preparations for the Stockholm Conference.

The success of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment was possible only through Maurice's mastery of international environmental diplomacy at a time of great tensions between North and South. Branislav Gosovic, who was one of the early members of Maurice's secretariat and became principal officer of the South Centre secretariat, has recently written an excellent analysis of the path to and from Stockholm on this issue referring to important meetings such as the Founex and Cocoyoc events.

After ten years with the United Nations Development Programme in Africa, New York and Geneva I watched the creation of UNEP and the General Assembly's decision to establish its Secretariat in Nairobi with much excitement. I happily accepted the offer of Paul Berthoud, the Director of the Environment Fund, to join him in Nairobi. At the beginning of September 1973 Maurice and a dozen of enthusiastic staff members moved in Uchumi house, an office building in the centre of town. His Deputy,

---

\* Jean Jacques Graisse started with UNDP in 1963, joined UNEP staff in Nairobi in 1973, and since 1979 worked for different UN organizations, including World Food Programme (WFP).

Mostafa Tolba, his Assistant Executive Director for Programmes, Bob Frosh, his Director of Administration, Richard ( Dick ) Foran were among the first to arrive in Nairobi in September 1973.

Father George Muhoho, the Kenya government representative who had facilitated the move to Nairobi and Hans Glittenberg, a friend seconded by UNDP, had been working for a few months to prepare for our arrival, set up offices and design the plates international staff would use on their cars; UNEP 1 K had been reserved for Maurice's official car.

The Annual Meeting of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank Group was held that year, for the first time in Africa, at the Kenyatta International Conference Centre. The KICC became UNEP's headquarters as soon as the Meeting ended. It was an imposing modern building in the centre of town. It had been built by a Norwegian and a Kenyan architect. The grey stone, cement and wood structure was a bit gloomy, as was the Norwegian architect we were told. Maurice's wife, Hanne, a youthful Dane who had great interior decoration talents, introduced bright colored furniture, big yellow and red armchairs, which gave a lot of warmth.

The day of the inauguration of UNEP's headquarters, a very big black leathered book was open to receive distinguished visitors' signatures and comments. Maurice's four children were the first guests to scribble their names on the first page. President Kenyatta inaugurated our headquarters. It was a big event in Nairobi as Kenya wanted to advertise the first world headquarters of the UN in a developing country. The UNEP logo with the left branch of the olive tree extended to cover a human symbol, as if to protect it, was the first UN logo which did not have the same branches on both sides. Not many UN leaders would have dared propose such a creative logo; Maurice did.

We were not to stay in the KICC for very long. UNCTAD was going to have its Fourth Conference in Nairobi in 1976 and we were told in May 1975 that we would have to vacate the building and settle in new headquarters. When Maurice informed us that he had obtained 140 acres of land ( a coffee plantation ) in Gigiri, at the outskirts of Nairobi, past Muthaiga, many of us wondered why we would have to work so far from the centre of Nairobi and why we would need such a large piece of land. Looking at

the site today, one has to accept that, here again, Maurice had a vision. Today, the United Nations Office at Nairobi hosts UNEP, UN Habitat, and a large number of regional offices of more than a dozen UN agencies. The most charming part of the compound is still the old UNEP headquarters and its beautiful garden. Construction started in July 1975 and we could move in by the end of the year. Maurice didn't have the pleasure to work in the great environment he had envisioned for UNEP's permanent headquarters as he left UNEP at the end of 1975.

It was in Maurice's conference room that the selection committee of the first Pahlavi International Environment Prize met. Former Colombian President Pastrana Borrero chaired it with Imelda Marcos, Jacques Cousteau and Professor Kassas. I had the privilege of being its Secretary. Everybody enthusiastically wanted to select Maurice, even if this first Prize was managed by the organization he had created.

Maurice had business acumen, which is not common in the world of international organizations. As we arrived in Nairobi in 1973, we all looked for houses to rent. Maurice immediately bought a lovely house with a nice swimming pool that he later



MFS with Jomo Kenyatta, Nairobi, 1973

sold for a very good price. He bought a second house and resold it. I met him one day in the modest lobby of the Hôtel d'Allèves in Geneva. I pointed out to him that I was surprised that he was not at the Hôtel du Rhône which he had bought on the Rhône river as it exits Lake Geneva. It is now a Mandarin Oriental. He told me he was not staying there because it was too expensive. He had always liked the cozy d'Allèves, so why stay at the Hôtel du Rhône. "When people get rich they don't know how not to spend their money." He also said that the world was not fair since the wealthier you were, the more you were offered for free and the more advantages you were granted.

A few years later, in 1988, as I was working for the International Trade Centre in Geneva, Maurice asked me if I would be interested in joining the team Prince Sadruddin Aga Khan was putting together to embark on the largest UN development and humanitarian programme of the eighties for the return of millions of Afghan refugees to Afghanistan and the development of their country. He introduced me to Prince Sadruddin who offered me the post of Chief of Staff.

Maurice thought I would enjoy being part of a new initiative, as I had enjoyed the early days of the Environment Fund. It amused me to note that he had sounded me out at Geneva Airport. Maurice was a great traveler and would not sit idle in airports. I remembered that when we received a newly recruited staff in Nairobi we often wondered whether the person was another of Maurice's airport recruits!

As Maurice had been asked by the Secretary-General to organize the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development – 20 years after Stockholm – he returned to Geneva to set up his new secretariat. His organigram included a representative to the Executive Director of UNEP, Mostafa Tolba who had replaced Maurice in 1976 and for whom I had worked till 1979. I was then UN Resident Coordinator in Nairobi and Maurice asked me to wear a second hat as his representative. I was very happy to accept. In 1991 Maurice attended a meeting at UNEP. I asked him if he had thought of replacing Pérez de Cuéllar whose term was up in December. With a huge smile he told me: "One does not run for, or run away from, the post of Secretary-General."

Maurice brought great success to the Rio Conference showing once again his organizational and diplomatic skills. At the beginning of his term Kofi Annan wanted to reorganize the UN system. He turned to Maurice to run the team that would present him proposals. I was Deputy Executive Director of the World Food Programme by then and was dispatched to New York to defend WFP's position. I met Maurice again between 2003 and 2005 when he was Kofi Annan's special envoy for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. WFP had a major food aid programme for the DPRK and I visited the country regularly. I met Maurice a few times to brief him on those visits.

Finally, I came across another of Maurice's creation, the University for Peace in Costa Rica. He had served as Chairman of the Council of Upeace for some years. Ban Ki Moon asked me to be a member of the Council in 2014-15. As I discovered the campus of the University I realized that once again Maurice had had something to do with these beautiful grounds!

# A Belated Tribute to Maurice Strong

Haas, Peter\*

Maurice Strong was one of those visionary figures who helped define an epoch. What Dean Acheson and George F. Kennan did for US foreign policy and global stability in the post World War 2 era, Maurice Strong did for international environmental protection and economic development, from the 1970s on. During a 20-year plus period, he helped invent many of the things we now take for granted. Grounded in an early intellectual climate which focused on the *global problematique*, he helped move it to real world policy linkages and the political inclusion of active stakeholders. He helped put the environment on the international agenda. But he also helped link the environment to many other important related issues. From an early point he realized that the focus of international agenda setting wasn't just the environment, it was environment and development, and then sustainability. He was also savvy about real need to cast issues in ways which were appealing to the North and South.

I didn't know him personally, although I have developed close professional friendships with many who were in his inner circle. As an academic studying international environmental politics, I became well acquainted with his impact on the world, from the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (UNCHE) to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), to the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and by reading his inspirational speeches. One of my lasting regrets is that I never got to meet him.

He was an institutional architect and conceptual visionary. He helped guide the UN and the world to accept new institutions for the transition to sustainability.

---

\* Peter M. Haas is professor of Political Sciences at University of Massachusetts Amherst. He has published widely on international environmental cooperation, global governance, and international relations.

As the Secretary-General of perhaps the most two path break-ing and agenda defi ning UN conferences, UNCHE and UNCED, he helped fi rmly install the environment on the global agenda. He also led UNEP from 1973-1975, where he elaborated and imple-mented the institution's unique mandate to be the world's envi-ronmental conscience by building networks and ties with other IOS, the private sector, scientifi c community, and civil society. He helped to build an inclusive constituency above and below states, which was intended to whipsaw states into more ambi-tious environmental and sustainability practices. Agenda 21, the operational document adopted at UNCED, provided the blueprint for a more inclusive UN and a more comprehensive roadmap for integrating environmental problems, and for integrating envi-ronmental and social management for states and other political actors.

He led through a combination of coalition building and inspira-tional exhortations. His mantra was "the process is the policy": all policies should be designed to promote the gradual inclu-sion of a variety of actor groups into a broad coalition behind



UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan presents  
Candlelight Award to MFS, 6 December 2002

environmental protection and sustainability and learning by states about the complexity of the environmental *problematique*.

He helped craft the defining narratives for international environmental policy and politics. Environment and development, emerging from the Founex meeting in the run up to Stockholm, has continued to inform international discussions at subsequent meetings and climate change governance. Common but differential responsibilities reflect the ideas developed at Founex. Environment and Development led to the concept of Sustainable Development by the 1987 Brundtland Commission Report. Environment and Development rested on two principles and compromises. First, environment and development are ineluctably intertwined: long-term development is not sustainable if it leads to profound environmental harm. Secondly, the northern countries have an ethical obligation to help pay for the costs of environmental protection of the poor countries.

These narratives shine through some of his more inspirational speeches to international conferences.

He also provided inspirational leadership, as can be seen from the following edifying quotes from his speeches at UNCHE and UNCED.

At UNCHE:

The essence of this point of departure is not the sudden discovery of something called 'the environment,' but in a fresh perspective, a new synthesis, a whole new approach enriched by respect for the wondrous variety not only of nature but of man and his dreams and struggles.

and

We have made a global decision of immeasurable importance ... we have determined that we must control and harness the forces, which we have ourselves created. We know that if these forces can be effectively controlled they will provide everything that life on this planet desires and requires; but if they are permitted to dominate us, they will have an insatiable and unforgiving appetite.



Our purpose here is to reconcile man's legitimate, immediate ambitions with the rights of others, with respect for all life supporting systems, and with the rights of generations yet unborn. Our purpose is the enrichment of mankind, in every sense of that phrase. We wish to advance...with greater understanding, wisdom and vision.

and

We have determined to assert our domination over forces, which we ourselves created. Our determination must be to enrich mankind and to advance together...The United Nations carries a direct and unique responsibility for taking the lead in discerning and acting upon the new environmental imperative. No one nation or group of nations commands the air and water of the planet. If we are to ensure their survival we have to act as the whole community of man.

At UNCED:

The wasteful and destructive lifestyles of the rich cannot be maintained at the cost of the lives and livelihoods of the poor, and of nature.

and

In our negotiations with each other, nature must have a place at the table, for nature will have the last word and our decisions must respect the boundary conditions it imposes on us as well as the rich array of resources and opportunities it makes available to us.

He was also a conceptual leader who promoted an "ecological approach to management." He helped to promote a more comprehensive approach to both environmental protection and economic development by promoting frameworks which could integrate the two. He helped to escape the box of narrow understandings of food security solely in terms of agricultural production, for instance, by expanding it to include notions of fairness and soil and air quality. For instance, promoting agricultural production cannot occur without heeding a variety of associated social and ecological effects. In practice, this means not only more integrated planning techniques, although it did include that, but also broader political empowerment and networking

so that groups involved in associated issues will have a political voice.

Without him we would not have a meaningful body of international environmental law, or the foundations for sustainability.

### **References:**

Lars-Goran Engfeldt 2009. *From Stockholm to Johannesburg and Beyond*. Stockholm: The Government Offices of Sweden

Peter M. Haas 1991. *Saving the Mediterranean*. New York: Columbia University Press

Peter M. Haas 2015 *Epistemic Communities, Constructivism, and International Environmental Politics*. London: Routledge.

Maurice F. Strong 1973 "One Year After Stockholm" *Foreign Affairs* Vol 51 No 4 (July)

Maurice Strong archives. Harvard University

# My testimony in memory of our dearest and most revered friend Maurice Strong

Hirono, Ryokichi\*

My first encounter with Maurice Strong was at the time when he came to Tokyo in 1971 in preparation for the convening of the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment in 1972. He came to Japan to talk to the Government of Japan and various stakeholders including business community to positively participate in the Conference to mainstream Environment and Social Agenda in national and local development plans and programs. His exposition was so brilliant and convincing that nearly all the heads of Japanese multinational corporations in attendance who had been primarily concerned with their corporate and national economic growth were deeply impressed and decided to install a study committee at their corporate group called Keizai Doyukai – the Japan Federation of Corporate Executives – and came out even before the Stockholm Conference with a policy proposal on Corporate Social Responsibility, the first ever published in Japan. Maurice Strong was not just a person with a long-term vision on what the world ought to be, but a man of action that opened the eyes of important stakeholders in society to the essentiality of and the need for Sustainable Development and for organizing Partnership of all individuals and entities for its achievement. He persistently and rigorously pursued this goal in all countries, developed and developing, as heads, chair and mentor of all those intergovernmental and civil society organizations.

This occurred throughout his entire life, often in spite of some difficulties posed by self-serving politicians. Always open-minded

---

\* Ryokichi Hirono, Professor Emeritus, Seikei University, taught at universities at home and overseas, worked at UNDP, other international organizations and CSOs.

to listen to diverse views on any global issues, and committed to improving the lives of the bottom half of the people in every country, Maurice was a rare person to be able to bring together opponents, making them into effective collaborators and even promoters at the community, national and international levels of the shared goals of Social Justice, Poverty Reduction, Human Rights Protection, Environment Conservation and World Peace. It is no exaggeration to say that Maurice Strong's visionary wisdom and passion for Sustainable Development resonated by Hanna's concern with the Indigenous Peoples and their uncompromising commitment to Multilateralism were echoed in the Montreal Protocol, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biodiversity, the Agenda 21, the Kyoto Protocol, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement under the United Nations auspices.

It is my sincere hope that this book in memory of Maurice Strong, our dearest and most revered colleague, will inspire all its readers, especially the younger generations to transform the current conflict-ridden, socially divisive world into being inclusive, sustainable, resilient, cooperative and a peaceful world.

"As for me, I have pursued my vision for Sustainable Development rigorously and steadfastly promoted by Maurice Strong ever since 1946, when I saw an American movie "How Green our Valley was!" It was a revelation to me at 15 years old, as it dealt seriously with the adverse impact of coal mining activities on the lives of miners, their families and the whole community located in a beautiful forest-covered valley with bird chirpings all around. I have had a great admiration for Maurice Strong for his persistent and energetic efforts. Often ahead of the prevailing values commonly accepted in those times, that no human activity, whether in production, distribution or consumption, could be justified unless utmost care should be paid simultaneously to the preservation of our own Mother Nature and the Global Environment. His mission has thus been to do justice to the long-term interests and concerns of humanity, while trying to help people to solve their short-term problems in daily life. I was deeply impressed to learn from Maurice when I met him for the first time on his visit to Tokyo in 1971 that while I was involved during my younger days in participating in student

movement against nuclear weapons in the 1950s and joined the massive protest movement on streets of Tokyo by the people against Minamata and the Itai-Itai diseases and Yokkaichi asthma in rapidly industrializing 1960s Japan, Maurice had already been convinced of the critical importance of a worldwide movement to fight against the ongoing degradation of the Global Environment, begun to prepare for convening the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment in 1972 and tried to warn governments and people around the world of the coming peril of Unsustainable Development during the time, evolving the concept of Sustainable Development which since 1985 began to prevail when *Our Common Future* was made public by the Brundtland Commission under U.N. sponsorship."

"I am ever grateful to Maurice Strong who had consistently encouraged me to continue my active involvement for Sustainable Development at universities and civil society organizations (CSOs) in Japan and overseas and to scale up such movement through collaboration with the Society for International Development (SID) in the 1970s and through working at various international organizations including the United Nations secretariat in the 1980s, and to continue this global crusade ever more deeply and on into the 1990s and thereafter in various CSOs at home and abroad as well as helping those governments and institutions who required help for Sustainable Development. As the international community began in 2016 to implement the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 2016-30 and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change over the next three and a half decades to 2050, I am certain that we shall keep reminding ourselves not only of Maurice's profound contribution to all these global efforts for Sustainability Development but more importantly his persistent reminder for *Where there is a Will, there is a Way* which resonates with that of my own father throughout his own 94 years of life with which I had the privilege of associating myself with till his final departure."

# Vision and leadership

Htun, Nay\*

Maurice Strong possessed the very rare combination of vision and leadership that transcends time and geography. This entwined quality was a lifelong pioneering dedication to a global sustainable future with impacts that are diverse, accumulating and expanding.

With the UN General Assembly appointment as the first UNEP Executive Director, Maurice's first decisions were very consequential. One of these was the selection of Nairobi, Kenya to be the first UN organization to be headquartered in a developing country. Another consequential decision was to appoint Mostafa Tolba as his Deputy, who became the longest serving UNEP Executive Director. Maurice and Mostafa had a very competitive relationship with mutual respect. At the celebration of Maurice's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, organized by IUCN in Gland, it was a very memorable dinner where each took turns and spoke warmly of each other, in the presence of many of their old friends.

Maurice's prescience ability recognized that UNEP's catalytic role would be of prime importance to effectively respond to the emerging risks posed by the state of the environment and crucially the imperative to widely mobilize actions needed to safeguard and sustain its integrity, as the quality of the environment affects everyone and everywhere. To be an effective catalyst, credibility and quality are the most important property. At the First Session of the UNEP Governing Council in June 1973, Maurice in his Policy Statement proposed the "Outer Limits" to Changes in the Environment for Programme development and priority, with focus on: weather and climate modifications, environmental problems of specific

---

\* Nay Htun, worked in UNEP Industry and Environment Office, Paris, in UNDP as regional director for Asia Pacific, and in the UNCED Secretariat. as Programme Director and Special Adviser for Business & Industry. He was adviser to Strong during his term as president of UPEACE Council.

industries, "eco-development" and environmental law. The "Outer Limits" programme supported by Earthwatch and the Global Monitoring System (GEMS) acquired better scientific knowledge on the role of carbon dioxide, substances that deplete the ozone layer, toxic chemicals and hazardous wastes. These formed the foundation and paved the way for global cooperation and actions that are still unfolding.

As Secretary-General of the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment, and again in the same role with the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development – The Rio Earth Summit – Maurice played a long, continuous, pioneering and central role that established institutions, processes and an un-precedented legacy.

Notable examples include the 1987 Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone layer; the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UNFCCC and its Kyoto Protocol and the subsequent Paris Agreement; the Biodiversity Convention. The Earth Summit catalyzed and mobilized governments, private sector and civil society to subscribe to the concept, principle, policy and practice of sustainable development, with the imperative need for development that is economically, socially and ecologically sustainable, as well as equitable and inclusive, for the benefit of current and future generations.

When I joined UNEP in 1976, I was motivated by Maurice's vision, leadership and dynamism to mold an emerging organization that would be qualitatively different from the modus operandi of UN organizations, and would address and respond with alacrity to the opportunities and challenges for the sustainability of "global commons" contributing to the Stockholm Declaration "an environment that permits a life of dignity and well-being."

The steadfast qualities of vision, leadership and commitment continued to be very much in evidence when I joined Maurice at the Rio Earth Summit Secretariat. When we flew from New York to Geneva to set up offices at the Chateau in Conche, Maurice already had in vision the Conference outcome. These would be Agenda 21 an Action Platform for Sustainable Development *Earth Charter*, a visionary document for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful global society in the 21st century – a document

Maurice was working on since the late 1980s. The prevailing situation at the time of the Earth Summit did not enable a consensus, and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development was adopted. The *Earth Charter* now has worldwide institutions actively promoting its principles and applications and ably supported by the Earth Council in Costa Rica; the Platform for UNFCCC and the Convention on Biological Diversity, two legally binding instruments to be opened for signature. It was a most memorable occasion to witness Maurice political acumen and diplomatic skills in organizing the 172 Governments represented by 108 Heads of State or Governments to sign the two historical treaties at the Rio Convention Center. The Summit also catalyzed negotiations on the Convention to Combat Desertification, increasingly important with expanding droughts, land degradation and the imperative need for food security.

The Rio Earth Summit process is remembered for opening up the participation and diversity of non-governmental organizations in UN conferences. There was much debate on the criteria for selecting civil society participation at the First Preparatory Committee meeting held at UNEP HQ in Nairobi. After much passionate debate, with the deft facilitation of Maurice and Ambassador Tommy Koh, the delegates reached consensus and adopted *relevant* and *pertinent* criteria for selecting NGO participation. From the founding of the UN when only 100 plus NGOs, primarily from North America and Europe were registered with the UN ECOSOC for admission as Observers to UN meetings, the Earth Summit process welcomed, registered and involved over 50,000 from all regions of the world. Maurice mobilized significant financial and in-kind resources to support the preparatory process and NGO participation.

Civil society participation in UN Conferences and indeed in most if not all conferences were transformed and is now a given norm. Maurice would often remark that the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development was not an Environment Summit nor was it a Development Summit. The focus was on *and* - the policies, strategies and tools needed to integrate the two inextricably linked aspects. "Agenda 21" aimed to exemplify integration processes.

Maurice was convinced that education has a central role in promoting sustainable development. Very soon after we arrived in



Geneva, we drove to Talloires, France where Maurice was invited to give the Keynote Address to a Conference of world academic leaders, organized by the President of Tufts University with the support of the Dean for Environmental Studies, at Tufts European Center. Maurice's presence and keynote help crafted the October 1990 Talloires Declaration of University Leaders for a Sustainable Future. The Conference voiced their deep concerns about the state of the world environment and articulated eleven key actions that institutions of higher education should take to create a sustainable future. The actions advocated are as relevant and pertinent today as they were almost three decades ago, when environmental awareness and literacy for sustainable development were at its infancy.

Deterioration of environmental quality, depletion of natural re-sources, and lack of equitable and inclusive participation in the development process are often some, if not most of the major sources, causes and triggers for conflicts that need to be studied and discerned. Maurice encouraged this quest at the University for Peace, to acquire better knowledge and tools for identification, prevention, resolution and effective response policies and actions. Improved knowledge of sources and causes would result in remedial response, in particular institutional mechanisms that will be less ephemeral, have better focus and be more effective. Healing of the damages that result from the conflict will not become temporary "Band-Aid" relief. Preventing conflict builds trust and encourages peace between people and with nature.

The environment affects everyone everywhere and all human endeavors and indeed civilization have been and are impacted by its condition. All sectors of society need to be involved for a sustainable future. Maurice had the outstanding ability to identify, motivate and enlist people and organizations to join him to respond to prevailing as well as new existential threats. He believed that environmental security; human security and global security are inextricably linked. The quality of the air, water, soil, biodiversity and the ecosystem services have direct impacts on human wellbeing and welfare. Understanding root cause and sources enables a holistic and integrated response, enhancing economic, social, ecological security.

Two major groups Business and the Military have important roles in society.

Maurice often said business is a major cause of environmental degradation, but business is also indispensable for providing solutions. One of the first actions Maurice took when arriving in the unfurnished UNCED Conche office was a meeting with Stephan Schmidheiny and Hugh Falkner to establish the Business Council for Sustainable Development and enlist the involvement of business CEOs in the Earth Summit and its process. The BCSD contributed extensively with technical inputs over a two-year period and its Members participated in Rio. The BCSD has evolved into the World Business Council for Sustainable Development, WBCSD.

Earlier when Maurice was appointed UNEP's first Executive Director, he established the Paris-based Industry and Environment Office and appointed the dynamic Baron Leon de Rosen as the Director. The oil industry was the first sector to form the International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association, IPIEC, over 40 years ago, to interact with UNEP. A whole range of issues were candidly discussed and constructive response options emerged, including steps to phase out lead additives in gasoline, reducing Sulphur content in fuels, minimizing and responding to accidents and oil spills in exploration, production, transportation and storage. At that time and for some years to come, there was no consensus on the role of the petroleum industry in carbon dioxide emissions and other greenhouse gases.

Soon after, the Chemical, Motor Vehicle, Pulp and Paper, Iron and Steel, Aluminum industrial sectors were systematically coopted to interact with UNEP Industry & Environment Office.

Maurice always emphasized that the Human Environment was central to the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment. Human security is inextricably linked to environmental security. And human security is the very foundation of national security and for global security.

The 5 December 2000 was an extraordinary day. It was the Royal Birthday of HM King Bhumibhol Adulyadey, the late King of Thailand and the world's longest ruling Monarch, internationally respected and recognized for the caring, wellbeing, welfare and

security of all people in the Kingdom, practicing life-long sustainable management and equitable use of natural resources, spirit of tolerance, and peaceful co-existence. His Majesty exceptionally consented to receive from Maurice the UPEACE Honorary Degree at its 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of UN GA Resolution 25 / 55 December 1980. At Chitralada Palace, Bangkok, on 5 December, in the presence of 20 Leaders of Universities from Asia Pacific. His Majesty consented to receive his 20<sup>th</sup> Honorary degree. And exceptionally then His Majesty stayed for over 90 minutes to converse with Maurice and each of the university leaders, with live TV coverage.

Robert McNamara joined Maurice in convening over 40 Generals and Admirals from 9 countries in Asia to a meeting co-organized in Bangkok with the Thai military command, to discuss the role of the military in responding to traditional, new and emerging risks. The Military is well aware that disasters wreak havoc and destruction on the economic, social and ecological patrimony of a community, affecting human security and exacerbating conflict. The meeting participants realized that with climate change and ecosystem destruction, there will be increasing extreme weather events causing major floods, draughts and infectious diseases that will give rise to more epidemics, pandemics and potential zoonosis. There was consensus that the military with its considerable assets can provide robust and fast reconstruction and rehabilitation response to minimize damage and loss of life. Robert McNamara wrote a short note that the meeting was one of the best he had attended.

Maurice's humor, with his vast repertoire of jokes, his unbounded enthusiasm and optimism, his legendary vision, prowess in networking and his good will to all, will be fondly remembered. A few months before he passed away, during our phone conversation, he was as jovial, alert and contemporary as always. He was keenly following the COP 21 negotiations and was optimistic for a successful Paris outcome a few weeks away that would coalesce global political-will to respond to climate change, four decades following the Outer Limits programme he initiated. Throughout my almost 40 years of association with Maurice in various activities, I have never heard him denigrate anyone and was respectful and attentive to the views of others.

Maurice provided funds for travel and two weeks of accommodation for *every member* of the almost 60 UNCED secretariat team to travel from Geneva to Rio to participate in the Earth Summit. This thoughtful and magnanimous decision was symptomatic of his caring character. Truly a great man of compassion, transformation, vision and leadership.



At the North Korean orphanage

# Maurice Strong

Iglesias, Enrique\*

Maurice was a very dear friend. I am deeply grateful and indebted with his unique personality, his generosity and his strong influence on me. He encouraged my interest and personal commitment to environmental issues and human development. I met Maurice through mutual friends at the beginning of 1971. At that moment, he was training his staff for the organization of the first World Conference on environmental issues, starting a large number of international events promoted by the organizations. I accepted with great interest and appreciation to be part of the Secretarial team.

We encountered a big problem when preparing the Conference and its Declaration. Developing countries – particularly large ones – like Brazil and India- strongly mistrusted the Conference's goals. It was understood as a strategy from developed and rich countries to prevent developing ones from access to their natural resources, like forests, after the historical depletion made by today's developed economies. Something had to be done to persuade developing countries to strongly support the proposed Conference.

From those difficult circumstances, Maurice had a brilliant idea: to convene a meeting of distinguished personalities and experts from developed and developing countries to discuss the basic ideas and objectives behind the Conference. Three prestigious experts prepared an excellent document that facilitated the discussion among a selected group of experts, politicians and government delegates to reformulate the basic objective of the Conference.

---

\* Enrique Iglesias was Executive Director of UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), Secretary-General of UN Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy, and President of Inter-American Development Bank. He was member of the 1971 Founex Panel.

Barbara Ward, Gamani Corea and Mahbub ul Haq, prepared an outstanding paper underlining poverty as a major issue to be highlighted by the conference together with its environmental objectives. The worst pollution of the environment was poverty and technological progress. This simple but fundamental state-ment saved the Conference. Developing countries, not only sup-ported it, but also became major promoters of its objectives. The meeting took place at Founex, Switzerland, in 1971, and became the basic gospel to bring attention and support from people and governments. Maurice asked me to organize four major preparatory meetings to discuss the basic objectives of the Conference defined by the Founex Group with government officials, experts, representatives of social institutions and academics, in Africa, Asia, Middle East and Latin America. I had the pleasure to work in the organization of these four meetings with the central participation of Maurice, in Mexico, Beirut, Addis Ababa and Bangkok, covering basically all developing countries in the World. The final Conference in Stockholm was a great success as a result of all the preparatory work and the large number of excellent papers in support of the Conference objective. This was also a historical agreement of political commitment to preserve the environment. China made its debut at this World Conference in Stockholm.

It was the very first large international Conference of United Nations on environmental issues. Other Conferences followed under the spirit of Stockholm: Habitat, Renewable Energies, Wa-ter, etc.After this meeting, and as a result of it, Mahbub, Gamani, Abdala, myself and other participants of Founex, organized the First Forum of the Third World. Maurice continued his work with the approach and the objectives launched in Stockholm, putting in place the First Secretar-iat. His commitment to the Third World was patented through his plight to hold the Secretariat in a developing country. It was a historical measure and not an easy task for him to undertake. The UN establishment was pushing for Geneva. Maurice suc-ceeded, and the Secretariat was established in Nairobi thanks in great part to his initiative and perseverance.

There are many things that can be said about his work, his ideas and his devotion for UN and its role in the World. After so many years working with such a diverse group of people, I strongly believe that he was one of the most committed and impressive personalities I have ever met in International Affairs.

Our world today needs people with his values and his strong commitment to peace and survival of civilization in a constructive dialogue with nature and developmental policies. We so miss him now.

# Maurice Strong, United Nations and Korean Peninsula

Ilitchev, Alexander\*

Virtually unknown is the story of how Maurice Strong was part of a global diplomacy on resolving the Korean conflict and preserving peace on the Korean Peninsula.

When on 30 December 2002, the Chef de Cabinet of the then Secretary-General of the United Nations Kofi Annan asked me, a senior officer of the Political Department, to see him, I could not really know that it was the beginning of the fascinating two and a half years of a diplomatic journey on one of the world's most difficult international challenges. I learned at the meeting that Kofi Annan was going to name Maurice Strong as his Personal Envoy for the Korean Peninsula. I was aware of different opinions about him. Moreover, it was me who had earlier advised against the visit by the Secretary-General to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) that Maurice Strong proposed some time ago – because the meeting with North Korea's leader had not been secured. I did not, however, hesitate to agree to the assignment to work together, as it turned out, with one of the most extraordinary men I have ever met.

We met each other on the first day of the new year 2003, and felt mutual sympathy and respect from this first encounter. Maurice was together with Kristina – his step-daughter a truly nice person and, as I discovered later, highly effective personal assistant to him. The next day, both of us took part in the brainstorming session at Kofi Annan's residence, with virtually all the UN brass present, exchanging views about our upcoming mission to Pyongyang. The participants agreed with my proposal that the mission should also encompass the other main concerned capitals, including Seoul, Beijing, Moscow, Tokyo, as

---

\* Alexander Ilitchev, Russian diplomat and former United Nations official.



the United Nations should aim at prodding peaceful multilateral approach towards this looming crisis. On 3 January, we were in Washington to meet with Colin Powell, U.S. Secretary of State, and other officials, who were worried about the rising tensions in the region. The Americans, however, did not have more than certain *should* or *should not* messages to convey in Pyongyang. Stopping on our way to Pyongyang in Beijing, we were exposed to a quite different view of the situation.

For one week, we found ourselves in North Korea's capital. Pyongyang had met us with the biting frost. With a severe shortage of electricity and heat, so the official offices felt even colder inside than outside. Those days, North Korea was a truly isolated country, and face-to-face encounters there were a rare opportunity. Recalling what we heard there on our first visit, as well as during our subsequent trips, and looking at the situation then, one cannot but admit the consistency of the DPRK's own approach. At the same time, if convinced, North Koreans should in a normal setting give a try at exploring other possibilities. Thus, initially openly skeptical about our arguments about multilateral negotiations to resolve the situation, North Koreans eventually agreed to the six-party talks framework, while maintaining, of course, their direct focus on their interaction with the United States.



MFS with children in a park, Pyongyang, 2004

Maurice suggested, to begin our work in Pyongyang with meeting the UN team there – an impressive small group of dedicated people, living and working in very trying conditions. He was relentless with the North Korean authorities in demanding some improvements in these conditions. It was clear while listening to the UN team that in addition to the security crisis, there was a humanitarian crisis on the horizon, as the pipeline of international assistance was about to dry up. Our visits to a provincial hospital and orphanages, as well as other information, confirmed that some North Koreans needed immediate help. So, when we returned to New York, Maurice convinced Kofi Annan to launch an international appeal to donors for emergency humanitarian assistance for the most vulnerable in the DPRK. The appeal worked, and Pyongyang began talking to Strong as a person *who delivers*.

Maurice impressed me from day one with his seemingly never-ending energy, passion about what he was doing and insatiable appetite to learn. Eager to become familiar with the gamut of political and security issues, surrounding the Peninsula, he asked during our very first meeting for the literature and books to learn the subject. He began with “swallowing” overnight Oberdorfer’s “The Two Koreas.” Other books and many hours of our discussions followed. It helped that both of us never saw any military solution to this problem. Both of us were believers in engagement with North Korea. We were not, however, oblivious to the fact of how daunting was the task of resolving the nuclear issue on the divided Peninsula. We were in Pyongyang on the day of the U.S. invasion in Iraq in March 2003 and saw the shock on the faces of North Korean officials. We were, probably, the first to hear face to face what is now North Korea’s mantra about having no choice but to acquire nuclear weapons as a deterrence.

Maurice brought to the table his unique experience in development, as well as business and energy. He immediately agreed to the concept of a “comprehensive approach,” – the need to address together security, economic and other issues. Maurice also shared the need to offer the DPRK something of serious interest to them in return for their movement around nuclear and other international concerns. He did not waste time to start putting together – quite successfully – an outline of an international

framework to help meet North Korea's energy needs, mobilizing resources and experts towards that end.

Here I should mention Strong's commitment to help the two sides on the Korean divide to work together. It was his dream to see Korea becoming one again. I cannot imagine anybody outside South Korea who would be more supportive of the *sunshine policy* of engagement than Maurice Strong. He urged South Koreans to reach national consensus about reunification and reach out to the North and North Korean people. He was strong on a similar message in Pyongyang as well.

Communication talent was an unmatched signature feature of Maurice Strong. Together with his ability to think clearly and being a visionary – and not making any mistakes, it was the subject of environment that kept him on fire all the time, he kept up a remarkable effort more than most other people he met. Actually, he told our counterparts in Pyongyang that they should improve their country's communications with the outside world. They eventually agreed with our advice to receive Dan Rather and Diane Sawyer – probably the first serious American journalists to visit North Korea.

Always on the phone, except in North Korea, where I was his only counterpart he trusted his thoughts too, he once told me that networking was his single most important investment in life. He had a talent for recognizing good people. Donald Gregg, then President of the Korea Society, was just one of them on our journey, not to mention many others among my compatriots, Koreans, Chinese, Japanese, Americans and Europeans. Networking, however, also requires choosing one's friends carefully. If we disagreed on anything, there were some whom I would not want to see around our mission again. Loyal to them, Maurice refused to discuss the matter. Sadly, I turned out to be right. The mission was suspended days before our critical talks in Pyongyang. Even though Maurice was later cleared of any wrongdoing, the mission could not be resumed. To this day, I firmly believe that our mission was unique and that, however modest on the global scale of things, it was a genuine and helpful effort of good will due to his leadership.

Maurice, a devoted believer in the United Nations, and as idealistic as the UN Charter itself, took great pride in carrying out

our mission under the UN flag. He also opened my eyes to his country Canada. I hope I did the same for him with Russia. Living a simple life from what I saw, he was taking care of his children and grandchildren as well as he could. During his daily morning walks, he was dictating his thoughts on a tape-recorder. It is my hope that his widow Hanne, whom he loved so much, will one day publish those thoughts. One does not meet people like Maurice Strong very often, ones who always have something inspiring, useful and wise in sharing with the rest of us.



Maurice Strong and Alexander Ilitchev , Pyongyang

# My Friend Maurice

Khosla, Ashok\*

I have never met anyone who could make so many people feel so special as Maurice did. As special in their own eyes and so special to Maurice himself. He had an amazingly large rolodex, counting among his personal friends literally thousands of persons all over the world.

From presidents and prime ministers to drivers and doormen, Maurice could establish a deep and lasting bond that made many who came in contact with him feel really important and valued. And not a single example did I see of such a bond as being anything but genuine – these bonds came from unalloyed empathy and deep interest in the lives of others.

Maurice was himself very unique. To me personally, of course, as well as being an effective individual, a superbly competent and efficient professional and a supremely dedicated and visionary global leader. With extraordinary force of will and intellect, he overcame major childhood handicaps of health and education to make pioneering contributions at the highest levels on some of the biggest issues of today's world. And he produced extraordinary results. It is hard to think of anyone in the 70-year life of the United Nations who made an impact on world affairs that could be compared to Maurice's long chain of contributions.

It was in 1971 that I first met Maurice. He was in New Delhi to persuade Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and her government to take active part in the forthcoming United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. The Conference, which was the first international initiative to deal with the dominant emerging environmental threats of the time – primarily those of pollution on

---

\* Ashok Khosla, co-chair of International Resource Panel (UNEP-IRP), has been involved among others in activities of UNEP, UNESCO, UNU, U.S. Academy of Sciences, IUCN, ICSU/SCOPE and Club of Rome. He is Chairman of the Board of Development Alternatives Group in New Delhi.

human health and natural ecosystems - was to take place at Stockholm in June 1972. In the months leading up to the Conference, Maurice, recently appointed Secretary-General for the Conference, undertook a grueling series of world tours to mobilize the intellectual, political and civic support for global action needed to protect the environment generally, and for the Stockholm Conference in particular.



MFS greets Indira Gandhi at her arrival to attend the Stockholm Conference, 5 June 1972.

The consensus view among policy makers in India, as in other developing countries, was that pollution and other environmental threats of the time were a concern and responsibility of the industrialized countries – both as the originators of these threats and as the beneficiaries from the activities that caused them as byproducts. To Mrs Gandhi's credit, her vision of a better world included not just eradication of poverty, but also creation of a healthier environment for all. To Maurice's credit, his genuine resonance with these views, combined with his own insights on the relationship between environmental degradation and marginalization of the poor helped him persuade Mrs. Gandhi to attend and eventually play a leading role in the success of the Stockholm Conference. As it happens, she was the only head of Government to do so besides the host nation, Sweden's Olof Palme.

One of the outcomes of the Stockholm Conference was the setting up of a new organization in the United Nations family, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), located in Nairobi. Maurice, who was appointed the first Executive Director of UNEP, set out to recruit professionals for the new body and it is a tribute to his powers of persuasion that he brought to the new HQ at Nairobi persons from such a wide variety of professional backgrounds from all over the world. I happened to be one of those he thus persuaded, moving from my very rewarding assignment as head of India's environment office to Nairobi to work in this even more exciting startup, infused as it was with the enormous energy and imagination that Maurice carved into its mandate and organizational genes.

Maurice was an arch builder of institutions. He was to organizations what Thomas Edison was to technology – with the difference that Maurice did not claim any intellectual property rights and was, fundamentally, committed to open-source innovation, dedicating the fruits of his creations to the public good. He created a wider range of organizations, in the public, private and civic sectors, than any other person I know of in the past hundred years. The reason he could do so was simple: he designed them creatively with strong mandates and identity, endowed them with robust management systems and directed them for a period, while building up a solid leadership that could meaningfully take over from him. He then soon moved on to other projects to do the same. This was the case with UNEP, which after 3 years he left in the very capable hands of Mostafa Tolba, whom he had chosen after the Stockholm Conference as his deputy, which made such a major, pervasive impact on the global agenda.

Over the next forty years, Maurice shuttled between various assignments ranging from heading large energy utilities, leading major UN initiatives and creating new businesses. All this while, he devoted a significant amount of time and effort in support-ing and nurturing diverse civil society organizations concerned with issues of sustainable development. His more formal assignments included heading the UN's Famine Relief Programme in Africa, and acting as an advisor to the World Bank and UNDP on issues of sustainable development. He also ran several large corporations in Canada and the US. At the same time, he was one of the leading lights in Gro

Harlem Brundtland's World Commission on Environment and Development.

In 1992, he was recalled by the UN to replay the Stockholm event, but at a much higher global profile. This time, as Secretary-General of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the event he convened and the canvas it covered was an order of magnitude even larger than the one held 20 years earlier at Stockholm. This Summit, held at Rio de Janeiro, brought together not only the heads of state from virtually every nation on earth, but also the CEOs of the largest corporations, and the leaders of numerous NGOs, academic institutions and other civil society institutions. I had the job of convening the NGO Forum for the Earth Summit, an event that brought together in Rio some 35,000 not-for-profits from around the world and which was made possible by tremendous support from Maurice and his secretariat. More important, Maurice saw to it that the voice of the NGOs was fully heard in the main, formal negotiations taking place in the Summit.

After the Rio Earth Summit, he seemed to be everywhere. Much of his life was spent in the air and in airports. Traveling usually with only carry-on luggage, Maurice was a one-man army, landing wherever there was a need for boosting commitments to a better world. He started the Earth Council as an umbrella organization for taking forward the outcomes of the Earth Summit. One of the major results of that effort, the Earth Charter, continues today to have such a strong global presence. He was a major promoter with Klaus Schwab of the World Economic Forum; a strong supporter of IUCN and WWF with many tangible contributions to the cause of conservation; reviver of the University for Peace, and active board member of numerous other international NGOs, including the World Resources Institute, the Beijer Institute, the Stockholm Environmental Institute, the International Institute for Sustainable Development.

During the forty-five years I knew Maurice, I was fortunate enough to work with him in many capacities – as a government of India official dealing with UNEP, as a staff member of UNEP, as a colleague on several boards, as fellow participant at conferences – and to meet him in numerous places as a friend and colleague.



I loved working with him on the various occasions I was privileged to be in a position to do so. One of the most amazing aspects of Maurice's professionalism was the fact that he could produce such an enormous body of work and yet free up so much time to have a relaxed chat about anything – work-related or otherwise. And any conversation with Maurice was greatly spiced up with the anecdotes and jokes that formed his other seemingly endless rolodex cards; I sometimes suspected that he may have had a secret ambition to be a stand-up comedian. It is with great pleasure and nostalgia that I recall the evenings and weekends at Maurice and Hanne's homes in four different continents and the rushed drives with them between conference venues, all filled with fun, humor and good conversation.

Maurice was an extraordinarily generous person, who touched the lives of more people than anyone I know – and in touching them, somehow helped make them better and bigger. But a touch from Maurice was not simply a passing gesture: he created numerous careers, and institutions that created even more careers. He was a self-appointed HR agent, connecting numerous colleagues, friends and acquaintances to jobs that were, more often than not, ideal for each other.

His selfless dedication and driven commitment to creating a better world for all will long be remembered, no less the skills with which he brought the world's nations together on numerous occasions to think beyond their narrow, short-term interests. He could do so because he never expected to receive anything, monetary or otherwise, in return. Enormous portions of his contributions were made on a pro bono basis. Maurice could volunteer such a substantial part of his time and energy for the larger global causes, with little attention to pensions and financial security, by investing in well-chosen business opportunities the earnings from which could more or less cover his own family's reasonably modest needs.

But greater than all his achievements as a true statesman, one of the very few the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has produced, was that so many of us remember him as a personal and deeply caring friend. He made such a large range of people a part of his family; I often wondered how he could make so much time for all of them and still produce such a vast quantity of output. I, like so many others, owe much to Maurice and Hanne.

# Maurice Strong – Ecological Entrepreneur

Koch-Weser, Maritta\*

Originally simply a successful business entrepreneur, Maurice Strong began to make world history once he decided to turn his masterful entrepreneurship skills to focusing world attention on our global environment. He became an emblematic ecological entrepreneur. At the outset, in 1971, he commissioned a report on the state of the planet - *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet*, a book co-authored by Barbara Ward and René Dubos. The report summarized the findings of 152 leading experts from 58 countries in preparation for the first UN meeting on the environment, the 1972 United Nations Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. This conference became the starting point for Maurice Strong's most remarkable half-century of environmental leadership, leaving in place today's global environmental governance – UNEP and a host of other environmental institutions and conventions.

## Stepping into the void

Clearly, Maurice stepped into a huge void at a time when the world had only just begun to grasp the ultimate frailty of our planetary environment. The potential for irreversible destruction had become clear, following two ferocious World Wars. There was unprecedented global population growth, and there were equally unprecedented levels of pollution, of rapid destruction of rainforests, of loss of species, and the depletion of ocean environments. The worst emitters of pollution as well as the holders of the greatest biodiversity and forest treasures were unevenly distributed around the earth. Global cooperation

---

\* Maritta Koch-Weser has worked in senior environmental managerial positions at the World Bank, as Director General of IUCN -The World Conservation Union, and since 2001 is President of Earth3000, a non-profit organization supporting innovations in governance for environment and development.

would be needed to activate positive change among the world community, wherever it mattered most. Similarly, environmental science needed to work beyond borders. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century environmental changes had continually gone from the local to the global, unconfined by and unresolved within national borders alone.

### **A man for the long haul**

From Stockholm onwards, Maurice became a most unique entrepreneur for the environment. He went strategically beyond local nature conservation goals of precursor movements and institutions like Pro Natura, UNESCO, and IUCN. His targets were global engagement, institution building, governance, and ever more obliging local commitments in conjunction with international legal frameworks.

For him, the moral dimension was the key underpinning of getting humanity's act together while there still was time. As he received the Brazilian Jose Pedro Cardoso Prize at the Rio+20 gathering in 2012, I heard him repeat one of his quintessential views, namely that care for the earth ..."is not just a technical issue. Everybody's actions are motivated by their inner life, their moral, spiritual and ethical values. Global agreements will be effective when they are rooted in the individual commitment of people, which arises from their own inner life."

This reminded me of a first one-to-one discussion with Maurice in the 1990s at the World Bank where I then was one of the managers heading up environmental affairs. Before we could turn to any matters of the day, Maurice first wanted to know where I was coming from, what personal motivation had driven me to work so intensely on environmental and indigenous matters – indeed, an unusual and unforgettable question in our large bureaucracy.

One of Maurice's strengths was to encourage people and initiatives large and small. But at the same time he made clear that modest incremental environmental support alone would never suffice to catch up with the steeply rising curves of global environmental troubles, from biodiversity conservation to climate change, and to the destruction of rainforest and the oceans. Long after Rio1992 Maurice continued along the same road, inspiring for example the

inter-cultural and interfaith process leading to the *Earth Charter*, the establishment of the Earth University and of the Earth Council. In my view, the year 2000 Earth Charter says it all.

### **First encounters**

My early familiarity – from a distance - with Maurice Strong and Hanne, his wife and best co-worker, dates back to the preparatory phases of the Rio 1992 Earth Summit, his central, most lasting master piece and legacy: it became the first-ever for heads of state summit on our world environment.

At that time I watched his advocacy speeches. For Rio 1992, Maurice had assembled an impressive and innovative expert preparation team in Geneva. They developed Agenda 21 – a guide like none before for environmental stewardship, addressing in detail each environmental theme. To implement it, the Earth Summit was meant to trigger global commitments, and massive funding.

I attended some of Maurice's meetings around Washington DC, where he was always accompanied by his wife Hanne sitting in the first row. His untiring demeanor and deep convictions soon became a source of strength for all. Maurice had something of an unstoppable wizard about him, endowed with an immensely inspiring presence and trademark level of energy.

He would not tire of explaining, admonishing, cajoling and confronting innumerable environmental sceptics. Not an easy feat. Then the environment was still looked down at by the dominant hardcore economists and engineers, and by the many pragmatists who believed in *good deals* and so-called progress as much as they believed in broken eggs for omelettes. We loved Maurice for putting the environment center-stage: he could draw high-level audiences none of us could have ever dreamt of. Back then, I served as a Division Chief in the World Bank's recently established Environment Department. My colleagues and I had finally found a firm place in the World Bank's management structure, but we were still facing daily uphill battles to truly change the rules of development lending, through environmental and social impact assessments before loans could ever be approved.

## Getting results

Maurice focused on results: some he got, some not, as of yet. Looking at the downside, he had aimed too high in terms of financial flows. In hindsight we can ask - was this truly a failure? I believe not, because by postulating - on well-argued grounds - staggering numbers, Maurice had taken people into a new, entirely different ballpark. He, at least, made clear that environmental NGO initiatives with their fragile funding could no longer stand-in for what entire societies and national Governments needed to take urgent action on.

He also convinced the Private Sector to act. Under the able leadership of Swiss entrepreneur Stephan Schmidheiny the World Business Council for Sustainable Development was established. To this day it remains an enduring platform bringing together major industries.

Another disappointment at Rio1992 was the impossibility to push through a global climate accord, primarily because of the recalcitrance of the US Government. Again, we may ask - whether the post-Paris 2015 accord should be termed a failure? In hindsight, Rio 1992 was indeed a first climate achievement of sorts, a first milestone along the longer road to Kyoto, Copenhagen, and Paris.

But there were also remarkable straightforward successes. The Biodiversity Convention went ahead, as did Agenda 21. And in addition a range of developments occurred in parallel to the Rio 1992 Earth Summit process. For example, the World Bank issued its first major analytical piece - the 1992 World Development Report on Environment & Development, and The Global Environment Facility was established, as a first international finance mechanism for climate and biodiversity conservation, to be administered jointly by UNEP, UNDP, and the World Bank.

## Post-Rio 1992

I last saw Maurice in 2012, at the celebrations of Rio+20 in Rio de Janeiro. At this mega-event we shared sessions, prizes, and breakfast buffet conversations. I had from time-to-time seen him in between, at weekend environmental gatherings at their Lost Lake home in the Canadian countryside, and in Washington

and Beijing. Post-Rio 1992 Maurice had worked untiringly on growing and keeping together a vast network of potential movers and shakers. Clearly, throughout the 1990ies, the Strongs made no distinction between private and professional goals. They committed their lives, their passion, and their social craftsmanship to environment and respect for indigenous cultures.

Post-Rio 1992, during years when James D. Wolfensohn served as World Bank President, we had for a while the privilege of counting on Maurice as a senior advisor to the President. In this role he was accessible to staff working in the trenches, as consummate networker and staunch in-house advocate. He backed the mainstreaming of environmental scrutiny, environmental economics analysis, and a clear World Bank stance – for instance when we faced borrowers reluctant to comply with environmental and social guidelines. Probably thanks to Hanne's influence, Maurice was also a voice for indigenous peoples. When he left the World Bank we lost a friend and great advocate.

### **To sum this up**

To do good by the environment, Maurice became a "Lebensunternehmer" of sorts, a juggler seemingly performing at least at three interconnecting levels. To attract the highest political levels of world attention he needed to hold high office. For his environmental causes he needed to raise funds and cooperation. For himself, he needed to make a living. He remained mostly, but not entirely, successful at all of it. For many years he was in frail health, living with diabetes. Once he had moved away from the United Nations stage, he still tried to work to good effect from China, during his late years. But he must have seen his global credibility and voice wane. For a moment, deservedly, the Rio+20 celebrations made the flame burn higher again. It gave him the chance to pass the torch to younger generations. For those of us who worked closely with him over the decades, his struggles will never take away from the recognition and the admiration we hold for his truly fabulous demonstration of the *power of one*.

The global environmental agenda of the outgoing 20<sup>th</sup> century could not have moved and matured so fast and so far without a Maurice Strong.

# In Praise of Maurice Strong

Koh, Tommy\*

1. I think Maurice Strong and I were destined to meet and to work together.
2. I was the Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations from 1968 to 1971. Singapore was a member of the Preparatory Committee for the history-making 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment.
3. In the 1960s and 1970s, there were politically two great divides in the world. The *first* was between the United States, and its allies, and the Soviet Union, and its allies. This was referred to as the East-West divide.
4. The *second* divide was between the rich developed countries, mostly located in the northern hemisphere, and the poor developing countries, mostly located in the southern hemisphere. This was referred to as the North-South divide.
5. The United Nations, in New York, was a theatre for both divides. The developing countries, of different ideological persuasions, belonged to an organization called the Group of 77. The Stockholm Conference was viewed with suspicion by the Group of 77. Brazil took the leadership role in opposing the conference. It argued that the developing countries should not be held back in their quest for rapid economic development and their sovereign right to exploit their natural resources should not be impeded by the new concern of the North to protect the environment.
6. Maurice Strong was duly appointed by the UN Secretary-General as the Stockholm Conference's Secretary-General.

---

\* Tommy Koh was Singapore's ambassador to the United Nations, President of the Third UN Conference on the Law of the Sea 1980-82, Chairman, Preparatory Committee and Main Committee, 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development.

Then he worked tirelessly to move the preparatory process forward and to forge consensus. He was very grateful that some developing countries, such as, Argentina, India and Singapore, opposed the Brazilian narrative.

7. Reflecting our domestic ambition to develop rapidly and, at the same time, to protect our environment, I was outspoken in supporting Sweden's initiative and the work of Maurice Strong. I left the UN in 1971 to return to Singapore. It was my successor, Professor S Jayakumar, who attended the Stockholm Conference in 1972.

### **From Stockholm To Rio**

8. Neither Maurice Strong nor I could have foreseen that twenty years on, our paths would cross again. In 1990, the UN agreed to convene another major conference to be held in 1992, exactly 20 years after the Stockholm Conference. Unlike Stockholm, however, the Conference in Rio de Janeiro would focus on both environment and development.
9. Sweden had lobbied for one of its distinguished diplomats, Ambassador Göte Svensson, to be elected as the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee. However, when the UN Secretary-General appointed Maurice Strong to be the Secretary-General of the Conference, the Group of 77 argued that since he was from Canada, a developed country, the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee should be from a developing country. My name came to the attention of the Group of 77 and the UN because I had chaired the UN Conference on the Law of the Sea. My nomination was unanimously endorsed by the Group of 77 and accepted by the UN community.

### **March 1990 to June 1992**

10. On the 8<sup>th</sup> of February 1990, the UN Secretary-General, Javier Perez de Cuellar, appointed Maurice Strong as the Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), often referred to as the Earth Summit. In March 1990, the Preparatory Committee elected me as its Chairman. For the next 27 months, I worked



closely with Maurice Strong. During this period, I used to joke with Maurice that I saw more of him than I saw of my wife.

### **Division of Labour**

11. To work harmoniously, we agreed on a division of labour. Maurice assigned his deputy, Dr Nitin Desai, to assist me. I focused on seeking consensus on the Rio Declaration of Principles on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, and the non-binding statement of principles on forests. I worked very tirelessly to gain the trust and support of the 179 national delegations and the many Non-Governmental Organizations.
12. Maurice Strong complemented my efforts by travelling extensively to drum up support for this conference. Due primarily to his efforts, 116 Heads of State or Government attended the Earth Summit. He was also responsible for mobilizing the support of the private sector. He persuaded a well-known Swiss business leader, Stephan Schmidheiny, to chair the Business Council for Sustainable Development, which consisted of 48 Chairmen or Chief Executive Officers of some of the world's most reputable companies. Maurice Strong also succeeded in ensuring that the summit was well covered by the world media.

### **Maurice Strong's Legacy**

13. Maurice Strong has left us with a truly rich legacy. The world will never forget the work that he did as the Secretary-General of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment and of the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development. He was also the Founding Executive Director of the UN Environment Program, based in Nairobi, Kenya. He has certainly made the world a better place than when he found it. I am so proud to have been his friend, partner and strong admirer.

# The wisdom of the tribal elders

Leeburg, Louis\*

Maurice F. Strong was the Chairman of AZL Resources, Inc. when I first met him in 1980 just after accepting the job to be corporate controller. From my first meeting with Mr. Strong I always felt we had a connection that went beyond our working duties. From those days, I began to research his career and try and understand all the myriad of organizations that he worked with, gave speeches to and what he saw as his calling in life.

From the corporate world, I could assist Maurice as he moved between his for-profit interests into what I believe to be his true calling as someone with insight and compassion to try and assist in the survival of the human species. In working with him on his personal affairs I would read and edit his personal correspondence, which was significant, and in doing so was introduced to many of the people and issues that made up his multi-faceted life. He had told me that one area that he believed he could make a difference was leading governments to meet and discuss issues relevant to the survival of the human species rather than discuss the impact on their nationalistic interests. All countries shared the same planet, the same water, air and natural wonders. The direction of mankind needed to come together as a unified group if humans were to prosper and survive. His beacon of hope in this regard was the United Nations a creation that arose in his early youth after World War II. With hope on his mind he thought this would be the organization that he could assist in this global mission. In going to New York to apply for a position, he realized that his lack of educational credentials limited the positions that he would be qualified for, so he went

---

\* Louis Leeburg was controller of AZL Resources, Inc., and subsequently Executive Vice President of American Water Developmnet Inc., with Strong as the Chairman, and then as Executive Vice President and CFO at The John E. Fetzer Institute, Inc, with. Strong Trustee and Chair of Investment Committee.

back to Canada with the idea that through being a successful businessman he could parlay that into a better position to affect the change he thought he could bring about with the help of the UN organization. In a relatively short time he did that.

I want to spend my thoughts more not on his business or even his diplomatic skills in bringing together people representing their countries into meetings and having them championing rights of all people and not just their countrymen. Like many great thinkers of our time Maurice felt led by Spirit, something that is nearly impossible to define but also something that each one of us have experienced in our life. For Maurice, I believe that was developed early in life as a teenager he had exposure to the beautiful Canadian forests and natural beauty of nature. As a teenager, he left home to live with the indigenous people in northern Canada and became fully indoctrinated in their practices and their reverence for the natural world. I believe he soaked up much of this knowledge and it guided him for a lifetime along with his belief that mankind needed an awakening to what was transpiring. Every generation goes through major events that we hope will allow mankind to learn and not repeat mistakes but throughout man's existence and with the benefit and guidance of religious prophets, wars continue to occur, people take advantage of people with less resources or knowledge. Maurice repeated to me many times that no civilization was ever bombed into peace and probably never will. But because he had a belief he also felt compelled to try and create change, as he knew that mankind was unique in nature as we have hope.

As civilizations became more creative we could more densely utilize the arable land, discovered carbon materials to burn more efficiently than wood, explored more unexplored territory and since the 19<sup>th</sup> century the world population began to grow as our medicines and ability to combat disease improved, our understanding as to how to reduce childbirth deaths improved and our ability to sustain life increased. As the world life expectancy rose, so did the population. As the world prospers in many countries it became more noticeable when things did not seem to be okay. When Lake Erie caught fire, many people realized that the lake had been polluted to an extreme. In Los Angeles, smog was creating dangerous conditions for the elderly and people with respiratory ailments. Maurice with his travels

became more aware of what would be needed to unite people to a common threat to civilization. He began working with other individuals around the globe that were discussing issues that needed a global solution and not just a country specific solution.

Maurice with the wisdom of the tribal elders that he had learned from in his youth also understood that if the environmental movement was to be broadly supported that it needed scientific input as science was the language of the west. He also believed that science could also be the instrument that was needed so that people could look to objective measurements in terms of defining the change that was occurring. Much of the environmental degradation appeared to be noticed only after years of the problem growing to such an extent that it could not be ignored or explained away. Even today, many skeptics of the environmental movement think that all the changes are natural and that mankind did not precipitate their effect nor will mankind change the course of nature. Therefore, they propose that nothing change and no efforts be made to prevent many of the symptoms that appear to be manmade.

Since I am an accountant – Maurice pointed out – we need to issue an annual report depicting clearly and as objectively as possible the assets and liabilities of the earth. In doing so, it would demonstrate areas that are more at risk than others, and allow for all parties to list those objective measurements that would help determine the earth's environmental health. As temperatures rise, by how much, and is it uniform around the world or not, the change in the oxygen content of the oceans, the quality and oxygen content in the air in major cities, the size of glaciers and countless other facts that are measurable. It could be a means for all to be aware of the fragile nature of the planet that we occupy.

Maurice always took pride in seeing the changes that occurred from the first international environmental meeting in Stockholm in 1972 to the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration in Rio de Janeiro, where his years of meetings, years of networking with numerous scientists, businessmen, politicians, scholars, indigenous tribal leaders, students led to many of his most inspiring speeches about the future of the planet. Being with him in Rio, I never saw him so enthused and internally driven to prepare for and to orchestrate the two-week conference in 1992.

The global mind change that had occurred in those twenty years was amazing but at the same time he felt that so much more needed to be addressed. He always felt that mankind had some time, but that as it delayed actions it was making the pressure to do something that would make a difference even greater. And despite his ever-hopeful view that mankind would do the right thing and preserve the human species the facts as to the earth's health were deteriorating and people were not uniting behind the urgency that he hoped would occur.

In his later years, I visited him twice in Beijing, China, where he had set up shop to assist a government that was addressing their own environmental issues and was showing a true commitment to what could be done to improve the situation that they had in large part created to leap frog into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. We had meetings at Beijing University and with fellow Chinese environmentalists, discussing the issues that Maurice had spent a lifetime researching and discussing. As he looked to one of his last assignments he felt that if he could help China, even just a little it would go a long way as the Chinese were still the largest population and could also be a role model for others to follow.

As with everything, Maurice was involved with what he truly wanted to be, namely a servant to mankind. For me personally, he was always the father figure who inspired faith and hope.

# A contributor to a better world

Lees, R. Martin\*

I am very pleased to have this opportunity to contribute to the celebration of the life and achievements of a unique friend and colleague, Maurice Strong. I had the privilege of working with Maurice and learning from him in a number of his many incarnations where he played a key catalytic and leadership role in promoting international understanding and action.

His enormous contributions over many decades to the cause of the global environment and sustainable development are widely known and are taken up in other contributions to this volume. I will therefore sketch three valuable activities in which Maurice played a key role, but which are perhaps less well known.

I first met Maurice in 1981 when UN Secretary-General, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, asked him to become his Special Representative on the issue of financing for science and technology for development. The background is as follows.

Following the UN World Conference on Science and Technology for Development held in Vienna in August 1979, the General Assembly had established a financing mechanism to enhance the wide diffusion and application of knowledge, science and technology to promote the progress of the developing countries. This was intended to strengthen the *endogenous capabilities* of the developing countries so that they could themselves diversify and accelerate their development.

The financing plan envisaged contributions from both developed and oil-producing countries. However, the financial commitments

---

\* Martin Lees leads a programme on the advancement of systems thinking, with OECD, IIASA and University of Koblenz-Landau taking part. He was Executive Director of the United Nations Financing System for Science and Technology for Development (1980-84), Rector of the University for Peace of the United Nations (2001-2006) and Secretary-General of the Club of Rome (2008-2010).

made by governments in Vienna in 1979 did not materialize in reality at a donor conference, held in New York in March 1980. The Secretary-General therefore nominated Maurice Strong as his Special Representative to consult with the leaders of oil producing countries across the Middle East. As Director of the UN Financing system for Science and Technology for Development, I had the opportunity to travel widely with Maurice in the Arab world and came to admire his ability to present the issues to leaders clearly and effectively.

Our second collaboration was during the initiation and establishment of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development, (CCICED), which continues to play an important role today in the formulation of China's development policies.

The process began through the convening of a high-level international conference in Beijing in October 1990 that engaged the international community and the Chinese leadership on the key emerging topic of balancing economic growth and employment with the preservation of the environment, what we now recognize as "sustainable development." The Chinese leadership was prepared to move ahead with this idea as they already had practical experience of a similar initiative through the establishment of an "International Advisory Council on the Economic Development of Hainan in Harmony with the Natural Environment". The island of Hainan had been designated as the largest Special Economic Zone in China.

At the time, Maurice was totally committed to his role as the designated Secretary-General of the upcoming Earth Summit to be held in Rio in 1992. Nevertheless, he found time to attend the China Conference, which was focused on "The Integration of Environment and Development", based on his long relationship with China and his credibility on global environmental issues, he played a key role in encouraging the Chinese leadership to establish a continuing institutional framework following the Conference, which became the China Council.

This unique institution, the Council itself supported by a range of joint working groups and task forces, continues since 1992 to provide advice directly to the leadership with four main aims: to build international cooperation on the critical issues of

environment and development; to promote a coherent strategy integrating environment and development for China across Ministerial and disciplinary divides; to bridge the gap between science and policy; and to provide objective advice on environmental and economic issues critical to China's reform and opening up. I should underline here the key role of Canada in providing rapid funding to launch the China Council and then sustained leadership and support.

My third collaboration with Maurice – where he again took on a tough and important assignment from 1998 to 2004 - was in the revitalization of the University for Peace. Over his long and diverse career as other contributors have described, Maurice had an unshakable belief and commitment to the moral purposes and practical activities of the United Nations. He had therefore taken on a number of *pro bono* activities to support the United Nations.

Kofi Annan therefore called on him again in 1997 to lead a review of the performance of all UN bodies as a prelude to a programme of UN reform. In this process, the University for Peace, (UPEACE), which had been established by the General Assembly in December 1980 and is based in Costa Rica, was found to be failing. Under Maurice's leadership as Chairman of the Council – and briefly to his own surprise as Rector – we were able to build a solid academic programme and to restore the credibility of the University, here again with strong and visionary Canadian support.

However, the goal as hoped for by Kofi Annan that the University should become *the center of a worldwide network of education for peace* remains unfulfilled. This is principally because of the intense difficulties of finding the modest levels of financial support needed for activities focused on the vital issue of education for peace, although the world community can devote around \$1.7 trillion dollars per year for military expenditures.

I have selected these three activities from my own close experience of working with Maurice to show how he was able to make invaluable contributions in such diverse areas as science and technology for development, economics and environment and education for peace. Like many of us who knew him, I have wondered how Maurice was able to achieve so much in one lifetime



and to inspire so many others. Let me suggest the attributes, which most impressed me:

- Firstly, he was determined to contribute to a better world, and in this, his commitment to international cooperation and to the United Nations, in spite of many frustrations, was paramount.
- Secondly, he almost always adopted a positive attitude and vision. He was able to see opportunities whereby he would pursue them with his remarkable persistence and an energy level, which tired us all out.
- Thirdly, his engagement and vision were moderated and combined with his practical experience and realism.

His leadership and success were thus based on a unique combination of vision and inspiration balanced by a recognition and understanding of the political, cultural and institutional realities of world affairs.

The fourth attribute I would emphasise is my belief that Maurice was able to achieve so much because he was a proud Canadian. I have myself seen over decades how Canada has played an immensely valuable role in international affairs, from participation in the Marshall Plan and the building of constructive cooperation with China, through the establishment of the International Energy Agency closely linked to OECD, and of course, the creation of the China Council and the revitalization of the University for Peace.

If Maurice had not been Canadian, I find it hard to believe that he could have played such a successful role in building international consensus for concerted action to face the challenges of the modern world.

We are right, with this publication, to look back and celebrate Maurice's unique achievements. Yet, he would call out to us today to look forward: with clarity and urgency to face the emerging challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century and to renew our own commitments to build a more sustainable, just and inclusive world for the underprivileged, our children and the future generations.

# The Maurice Strong Legacy Scholarships: A Testimony to Humanism

Lipman, Geoffrey\*

"History is biography" so said Ralph Waldo Emerson and he might have been foreseeing the incredible life of Maurice Strong a simple man at heart, with a brilliant mind and a guiding hand in so many building blocks of today's global sustainable development agenda. Be it the UN system, the World Bank, the World Economic Forum, the Earth Council and so many more public and private sector entities. Including I'm happy to say in the influential Travelism – Travel & Tourism – sector where he had a deep personal passion for its potential as a sustainability change agent.

We first met in Geneva 25 years ago. I'd just become the President of the newly created World Travel & Tourism Council and as a business leaders group, with a big growth mission; we needed a complementary green vision. It was in the offices he had established for preparing the most important event of a life, already packed with remarkable international achievements. The 1992 Rio Earth Summit was in his mind the greatest opportunity to reset the interconnected path of human and planetary development, but as Maurice so clearly said in his end of life reflections "The planet will be fine...it's the people I worry about." And the results of Rio, with Maurice flanked by 100 world leaders and embodied in Agenda 21 formed a launch pad for the series of Summits which led to the long-term change Roadmaps of the Paris Climate Accords and the Sustainable Development Goals.

From that first meeting, we never looked back – he was teacher, mentor and partner- as he was to so many. From Rio, where

---

\* Geoffrey Lipman is Co-Founder of Strong Universal Framework - SUN ([www.thesunprogram.com](http://www.thesunprogram.com)). He met Strong during preparations for the Rio Earth Summit. At that time he was President of the World Travel & Tourism Council.

despite his immense responsibilities he always found time to talk, guide and befriend an innocent in the complex environmental world. I was proud then to know him and even prouder when we launched a year later the first sectoral Agenda 21, with the Earth Council and took it on a world tour together with UN-WTO. He pushed us into creating the first sectoral certification scheme *Green Globe* and establishing a University based environmental research centre. To the extent that WTTC plays a lead role in sector sustainability today, the foundations were laid under Maurice's guidance in its first decade. Since then as I danced between private to public activities, Maurice was always there to listen and to offer insightful suggestions. We were together on many occasions in Africa, in Latin America, in the Middle East, in Jeju, in the USA, in Europe, but most engagingly and significantly in China.

Maurice loved China and spent much of his later years in Beijing advancing publicly the view that China can be the leading light in a sustainable future, despite its difficult starting point. He also believed that the Chinese leadership fully understands its potential in this area and is transforming its economy accordingly. I had worked with the Chinese Tourism leaders in the late 90's as they opened up International Tourism in a very measured, strategic way, and joined Maurice in exploring that potential. It was fascinating to see how well respected his views were at every level of Chinese decision making - up to the highest reaches in both the public and private sectors. But even more interesting was to experience his deep-felt love of the people and the culture. He was most at home in a small restaurant where he took his dinner most evenings, enjoying the ambiance, the simple food and handing out sweets to the children, in whom he delighted. During these times we talked increasingly about education and his firm belief that the next generation will be the ones who make or break the response to existential climate change. He had written to a few friends about a concept of a World Environment University, urging them to explore the possibility in their area of expertise, and was until the end ever hopeful of some traction. He had asked me to look after the Travel & Tourism dimension and he encouraged the progress as we sought to build an interested community inside the sector. As the project developed, it became clear that the original bricks and mortar thoughts had to move, sharply into the cyber world and that

*travelism* could perhaps become the leading edge of his education vision.

In 2012, during the Rio+20 Summit, Maurice and I appeared on a platform organized by UNWTO to promote sustainable Tourism. I presented him with the first copy of my co-authored book on *Green Growth & Travelism* – with essays from 50 Leaders inside and outside the sector. It was dedicated to him for his inspiration and never-ending persistence in encouraging us to *go green* and his commitment to the industry's potential. In the preface, which he handwrote, he was as ever gracious in his praise for the industry and equally tough in his admonition that we simply were not going far enough fast enough. He pointed to climate change as the most serious challenge facing humanity and stressed the urgency of curbing carbon emissions. When he repeated these views in Rio, even the most trenchant pro-growth advocates joined in the standing ovation he received.

And indeed, he had received a similar reaction when addressing the WTTC industry stalwarts in Tokyo that same year. He had a way of saying the most controversial and challenging things, with a calm, lucid approach and always with the voice of reason. As we advanced, the Travelism education project, it evolved into a climate focused initiative, simply based on the premise that if existential means anything that's where we should concentrate. It took on a key partner in Felix Dodds, with whom I'd sparred years earlier when the then UN Commission for Sustainable Development explored *tourism* – he leading the NGO's and I the Industry. His UN expertise, multi-stakeholder perspective and shared beliefs have vastly improved the design.

In one of our last meetings in Ottawa before his death, I sat with Maurice explaining the plan to create a network of prefabricated, solar powered, community learning and innovation centres, cloud connected and manned by smart, bright graduates. Its goal would be to help the sector build climate resilience through Impact-Travel – good and bad impacts measured; green growth based and 2050 focused. His face beamed with pleasure until I mentioned we would call it SUN, the Strong Universal Network. He simply didn't want that, until I made the point that it would help to get worldwide recognition and support. When I added that we hoped to target One Belt One Road countries in the

system expansion, he reluctantly conceded – his love of China showing through.

I think he would have been equally pleased with our announcement on July 1st 2017 of the Maurice Strong Legacy Scholarships. We had planned to give 10 Packages of a graduate scholarship plus enrolments to our SUN<sup>x</sup> Impact-Travel System. Then we saw that it was Canada's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and thought how great it would be to go out on a limb and seek 150 Scholarship Packages. So that's what we did. We did it because despite all his global accomplishments, Maurice was at heart a great Canadian. He cherished his humble roots, his time spent with First Nation peoples, his sustainability transformation of Ontario Hydro and his international service for Canada.

It's this humility and humanity that we want to embed in the Maurice Strong Legacy Scholarships. As we build partnerships and sponsorships around the world, we will look for those who share a vision of responding to climate change from the ground up, as well as the top down. We believe this growing network of smart young people – committed to advancing the case for climate resilience through Impact-Travel – will do much to keep Maurice Strong's vision alive.

# Maurice Strong

Lovejoy, Thomas\*

I was interested in biological diversity from a very early age (and long before the term existed) and that inevitably meant I was interested in conservation and environment. I knew about Rachel Carson and Theodore Roosevelt, of course, but I had barely completed my PhD on an aspect of Amazon ecology when the UN Conference on the Human Environment took place in 1972. And Maurice Strong entered my life.

I don't actually remember when I first met him – if you can call meeting him being in a crowded room where he spoke. But the dramatis personae of environment was quite small then, so even though I was only in my early 30s, I came to know Maurice – then the first director of UNEP – quite early on. He became a permanent integral part of my life thereafter whichever of the sequential leadership roles he was in.

What particularly impressed me was his accessibility and egalitarian approach – the product of his Canadian ethos and his conviction that the environment belonged to everybody. Yes, he – by dint of the post – had to deal with world leaders, and he knew how important science was to the environmental agenda, but he also understood that the environment was for absolutely everyone. He understood environmental justice before the term ever existed.

There was also boundless energy: energizer was a term that he probably inspired. Some might even describe him as “driven” – and he was in the sense that he truly understood the array of environmental issues collectively growing in force over time (even

---

\* Thomas Lovejoy, a tropical and conservation biologist, who introduced the term “biological diversity”, is a senior fellow at the United Nations Foundation and University Professor in the Environmental Science and Policy department of George Mason University.

though individual ones like the ozone layer, and the widespread misuse of chlorinated hydrocarbons came under control).

It is no surprise that the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro – to this day the greatest assemblage of heads of state in history – chose him as its leader. And it was one of environment's finest moments: the three conventions (climate change, biological diversity and desertification), the Global Environment Facility and Agenda 21 came into existence simultaneously.

Maurice knew for the environmental agenda to succeed that essentially all sectors had to be involved from the most humble subsistence farmer and shepherd to corporate CEO. And he knew how to talk to them all in a marvellously engaging way.

When Jim Wolfensohn became President of the World Bank he recruited Maurice to an office right next to his, with basically a *carte blanche* to engage wherever he saw fit. I had the honor to serve as Chief Biodiversity Advisor to the World Bank at the time (a post that never existed before or after). We periodically interacted as seemed to fit. I never failed to leave one of those conversations without feeling inspired and uplifted.

It is hard to imagine a world without the whirlwind of perpetually constructive activity that was Maurice. I believe in fact that is his legacy: always urging us forward, always urging us to do more for the environment. We can all hear him cheering us on in our minds.

# Recollections of Maurice Strong

Marton-Lefèvre, Julia\*

Looking back on my international career, leading a number of important environmental and scientific organizations, I realize for the past thirty years how Maurice Strong has influenced my professional and personal journey. This all started in the late 1980s, when I was the Executive Director of the International Council for Science (ICSU), which Maurice knew well from the time of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, when the scientific community, represented by ICSU, was deeply involved in preparing that event.

In 1990, Maurice, in his capacity as Secretary-General of the UN Conference on Environment and Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro two years later, invited ICSU to be the chief scientific adviser to the preparations for the Conference. This invitation came in recognition of the scientific community's active and visible role in a number of programmes launched after the Stockholm Conference. Foremost in this was the work carried out by ICSU's Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE) notably on the biogeochemical cycles, especially the carbon cycle, which helped turn political attention to the green-house effect.

Other excellent examples of international cooperative work toward increased understanding of the earth system include the World Climate Research (WCRP); the International Geosphere Biosphere Programme: A study of Global Change, (IGBP; the structure and function of biological diversity (DIVERSITAS) and the study of the interactions between human society and its environment on a planetary scale, the International Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Programme(IHDP).

---

\* Julia Marton-Lefèvre is Former Director of international scientific and sustainability organizations: ICSU (International Council for Science), LEAD (Leadership for Environment & Development); UPEACE (University for Peace) and IUCN (International Union for Conservation of Nature).



In the 1990s a number of global observing systems were also launched as a result of a common concern by governments and scientists of the need to keep the earth system in its totality under continuous observation and in these and in the 1990 Second World Climate Conference, ICSU was the single non-governmental partner to UN organizations in many of these undertakings.

Although it felt natural for the scientific community to become a full partner with UN bodies in these efforts, it took the courage and independence of Maurice Strong, to turn to ICSU to ask for its help, thereby recognizing that the UN and governmental systems may not be able to provide all of the answers needed for the ambitious Rio Conference. ICSU, on its side, accepted the challenge and worked systematically alongside Maurice and his team to move the international scientific effort to a more noticeable policy level by preparing the 1992 Rio Conference. This was done by encouraging all of ICSU's members to establish links with their national preparations, to ensure that science was given due consideration in the lead-up to the Rio Conference. ICSU put together a very ambitious conference just a year before Rio on *An Agenda of Science for Environment and Development into the 21st Century: ASCEND 21*. This was the first time that scientists: physical, chemical, biological, medical, and social, with engineers came together to contribute their knowledge to the issues of grave common concern.

The ASCEND 21 Conference stressed "a new commitment on the part of the international scientific community as a whole to work together so that improved and expanded scientific research, and the systematic assessment of scientific results, combined with a prediction of impacts, would enable policy options in environment and development to be evaluated on the basis of sound scientific facts."<sup>1</sup> The Conference also forcefully asserted the responsibility of science – encompassing the natural social, engineering and health sciences – to provide independent explanations of its failings, and underlined the importance of the precautionary principle so that disturbances in the Earth System are avoided.<sup>1</sup>

---

1 ASCEND 21 Conference Statement

For ICSU these were not going to simply be lofty words, but rather a real change in operations. In his closing speech at the ASCEND 21 Conference, ICSU's President, the Indian Physicist and former science Minister, MGK Menon, announced "ICSU's intention to consolidate the cooperation between, and coherence of, ICSU's major international research programmes; strengthen ICSU's role in the evolving partnership among science, government, IGOs, business and industry; strengthen ICSU's capacity to prepare objective scientific assessments, report on scientific issues to the general public and decision-makers; strengthen its own activities in capacity building and help review the performance of Agenda 21 after UNCED."<sup>1</sup> This was a strong statement and a clear indication of the culture change in ICSU, none of which could have happened without the encouragement and push from Maurice Strong.

ICSU took its role as the principal science adviser seriously and played an active role in the UN Conference on Environment and Development. We were in the privileged position of being present both in the governmental sessions and in the large number of NGO events organized throughout Rio. In his address to the Plenary Session of the UN Conference, MGK Menon reminded thousands of participants that science was ready to "forge partnerships with other sectors of society," recognizing that "it is part of society and must contribute to the needed societal transformations that bring about sustainable development."<sup>2</sup>

All of the activities I have referred to here were launched in response to the growing realization of the extent to which the changes in our planet threaten the earth's carrying capacity, and the increasing recognition by governments that scientific knowledge of the earth system is a necessary ingredient for wise policy making.

After many years at ICSU, in 1997 I was offered a role by the Rockefeller Foundation to head up its LEAD – Leadership for

---

1 MGK Menon's closing speech at ASCEND 21 Conference, Vienna, November 1991.

2 Science International, A history of the International Council of Scientific Unions, Greenaway 1996.

Environment and Development – Program, established in 1991 in an effort to identify and train future leaders in the challenges of sustainable development. This was a part of a movement to help society prepare for the 1992 Rio Conference, and Maurice, one of the LEAD Programme's founding fathers, encouraged me to make this professional move. He was a member of LEAD International's Board and continued to give the organization and its director valued advice.

The premise behind LEAD was that leadership skills could be taught, or at least enhanced and that "a type of leadership was needed to champion sustainable development in places beyond its traditional home of NGOs and universities, into the corporate boardroom and the corridors of governments."<sup>1</sup> As sustainable development is itself a multi-disciplinary concept with economic, environmental and social dimensions, providing leadership training for it required the involvement of talented people from different sectors put in situations to understand and work with each other. And finally, addressing the needs of future generations, which is what sustainable development is about, required the participation of younger leaders who would share a strong common experience and then form a powerful network of trusted colleagues to continue to work toward the goal of sustainability.

In 2005, after eight happy and productive years at LEAD, with the encouragement of Maurice, I became the Rector of the UN affiliated University of Peace – UPEACE. Maurice's involvement with UPEACE began in 1999, when, as a part of his brilliant public and private sector career, Maurice was working on UN reform as UN Under-Secretary-General and special adviser to Secretary-General Kofi Annan. During this process he became concerned that the problems and malfunctioning of UPEACE would hurt the UN's reputation. The Secretary-General put Strong in charge of a major reform of the University, appointing him both Chair of the Council and Rector.

Maurice had been involved in Costa Rica since the establishment of the Earth Council after the Rio Summit. While the official history of UPEACE is a little vague on what happened between 1994

---

<sup>1</sup> Future Directions: A Five Year Vision for LEAD International, December 1997, p. 9

and 1999, it was clear that the university had suffered serious financial and management issues and the challenge of bringing UPEACE back to life was daunting.

As everything that he undertook, Maurice went into the revitalization project with energy, optimism and vision. He aimed at making the University a global one, and began by changing the language of teaching from Spanish to English, and by finding new leadership for the University. One of these was R. Martin Lees who as Rector from 2001 to 2005 was able to find donors and to build up the university with several Masters programmes, a joint degree offered with American University, and the beginning of UPEACE activities in other regions. Maurice continued to play a strong role in the revitalized University as Chairman of its Board. When I became Rector in 2005 my job was simply to continue to lead this unique university, which had regained its potential thanks to Maurice's courage and endless optimistic energy.

In 2007, I had to make a very difficult decision after an unexpected invitation to become Director-General of IUCN – International Union for Conservation of Nature – at its headquarters near Geneva. I loved my job at UPEACE and living in Costa Rica, but the challenge of leading IUCN was tempting, even if the offer came a little earlier than convenient. I will be eternally grateful for Maurice's generosity in encouraging me to take the job where he felt I could make a larger impact on the world, in spite of my short stay at UPEACE.

IUCN, established in 1948 with the brave design of a dual membership of governments and NGOs has the mission of influencing society to conserve Nature and to ensure that the use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable. Maurice began his close links to IUCN with the preparations of the Stockholm Conference, and continued to be a great source of advice and inspiration for decades. He remained a close adviser to its new Director General from the moment I took on the leadership of this complicated and important international organization.

In 2009, I decided to organize a meeting to reflect on the challenges and opportunities of the international environmental movement along with a celebration of Maurice Strong's 80<sup>th</sup> birthday. Maurice's contributions to IUCN and to most international (and Canadian) environmental organizations, was key in

their history. Among the participants were many of the people who had accompanied Maurice since he had been in charge of the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment; as he became the first executive director of UNEP (1972-1975) and the Secretary-General of the 1992 Rio UNCED. Having lost many of these elder statesmen since, this was the last time this historic group was together. Thanks to a donor we organized a lovely celebratory dinner after our meeting on the shores of Lake Léman. In my speech on that event I said of Maurice that: "The list of his accomplishments and contributions to our well-being is too long to enumerate here. Let's just say that the day Hollywood starts looking for an individual to convey the sense that one person can change the world, Maurice Strong will provide more material than even the most gifted script-writer can hope for!" There were many other testimonials to Maurice's important and multifaceted roles, which he constantly said were exaggerations, but which, I know, he greatly appreciated.

Looking back, as I have spoken at too many memorial services, and not convinced that those we were celebrating actually heard our words, I am so pleased that we organized this event, celebrating Maurice Strong while he could hear us and enjoy the day as much as we all did. He left us much too early in 2015, but if he had to go, he did so at an auspicious moment, just before the beginning of the important Paris Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change which was born under his leadership in Rio in 1992.

I was a young person when I first encountered Maurice, and his courage, optimism and energy have been important guides in my own career. I still count among my closest friends the other (then) young persons he had identified to work with him on Rio preparations. And his *can do* attitude has consistently inspired me to navigate calmly through challenging waters. He himself was young when he proved to the world, in the unexpected success of the 1972 Stockholm Conference, that he could perform miracles. We were fortunate indeed to have this magic with us for several decades!

# Maurice Strong, the watchman of environment

Mayor Zaragoza, Federico\*

*Using knowledge to foresee,  
using foresight to prevent- M .Strong*

Global perspective. His eyes covered the whole world, but he focused his attention mainly on the inhabitants of the Earth. From his observation post, which allowed him to get closer to every human being, Maurice Strong thought – in line with Julian Huxley, Aurelio Peccei, Michel Batisse... – that it was of the utmost importance to ensure that everyone, without exception, could have access to a healthy life.

All human beings are different from one another, yet equal in dignity: this was the conceptual rationale of this champion of international cooperation. The time he lived in was a critical time that urged great and exceptional personalities to try to hold back the economic and social overflows caused by globalizing neo-liberalism – a trend so eagerly defended by the Reagan-Thatcher tandem, so driven by its hegemonic ambitions – Nelson Mandela, Mikhail Gorbachev, Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, Jim Grant, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, Amadaou M. M'Bow, Gro Harlem Brundtland, François Mitterrand, Helmut Kohl, Narashima Rao... to cite only some of the most prominent ones ...

Recalling Maurice Strong is not only an act of justice, but also a very effective way to highlight which directives should be followed and how urgent it was to take action so that the compass of humankind is reset and we no longer walk –absent-minded and stubbornly – towards some point of no return.

---

\* Federico Mayor was Director-General of UNESCO (1987-1999). He is currently the Chairman of the Foundation for a Culture of Peace and member of the Honorary Board of the International Decade for the Promotion of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World. He is President of ECPD International Board of Trustees.

As a multi-faceted herald, a visionary that had already in 1971 pointed out the paths that should be followed and those that should be left behind in the 21st century, Maurice Strong was the sponsor of the Founex Report on Development and Environment, drafted by a group of experts nominated by himself, under the auspices of the UN. This document sees in both issues *the two sides of the same coin*, and highlights the essential role of education promoted by North American Association for Environmental Education (NAAEE).. It sets the foundations of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment, held in Stockholm in 1972, with Maurice Strong as Secretary-General.

The Founex Report had stressed the relevance of environmental issues at a time when policies and actions did not take into account the ecological environment and were still focused on development, rather on mere *economic growth*. According to members of the Founex Panel, "development" should include social, cultural and environmental issues. In the last, fifth chapter, the Report makes 25 recommendations related to eight different areas of action, with recommendation Number 15 having a special relevance since it suggests the inclusion of environmental concepts in all school curricula.

Founex and Maurice Strong's *hallmark* is clearly visible in Stockholm Declaration since it says that every ... "human being is at the same time the work and the architect of his surrounding environment, which gives him both his material substrate and the opportunity for intellectual, moral, social and spiritual development. In the long and tortuous evolution of human race, a stage has been reached which allows mankind – thanks to the quick acceleration of science and technology – to have the ability to transform in countless ways and on an unprecedented scale everything that surrounds us. Both the natural and artificial aspects of the environment are essential for the welfare of peoples and for the benefit of fundamental rights, amongst them the right to life itself."

It is not easy to imagine a more convenient and sound forecast to approach changes that have to take place immediately. Nothing is out of the reach of the unique creative capacity of human beings, said President J. F. Kennedy in 1963. The time yet to come still remains to be built, and if we don't come up with adequate solutions *in time to save the world*, we will then have to

re-invent them before it's too late. In this respect, the following statement from the Stockholm Declaration is of the utmost importance: "Mankind should sum-up its experience and keep on discovering, inventing, creating and evolving. If adequately used, the capacity to transform everything that surrounds us can help the peoples to enjoy the benefits of development and can give them the opportunity to embellish their lives. If used inappropriately or at the wrong time, the same capacity can cause huge damage to humanity and to the individuals who have it."

And further on it adds: "The protection and improvement of human environment for the sake of present and future generations has become a critical objective for mankind, and should be pursued in the same way as objectives established with regard to worldwide peace and social and economic development."

As sponsor of the 1971 Founex seminar, leading actor, first Director of UNEP... Maurice Strong was certainly at the forefront of all those movements that were at the root of the "Earth Summit" on environment and development, held at Rio 1992 with participation of representatives from 179 nations, and with Strong as Secretary-General and a leader responsible for establishing, on an international scale and at the dawn of a new century and a new millennium, the new patterns of behaviour in the *Agenda 21*. In the 80s Gro Harlem Brundtland chaired the Commission that used the term "sustainable" to qualify development – in its 1987 report *Our Common Future*. The aim was to replace everything that was consumed in order to ensure the best quality of the planet's habitability. During the 60s, the United Nations System had set forth that development should be *integral* – not only economic, but also social and cultural and *endogenous*. At the end of 1989, the book *Development with a Human Face*, co-edited by Richard Jolly and Santosh Mehrotra, also added to sustainability as the highest quality that development should strive for, instead of being reduced – as so often the case is – to mere growth.

*Agenda 21* represents precisely an important agreement regarding the efforts that everyone should be able to have sustainable development. It is a detailed plan of action that should be undertaken at the local, national and global scale by all organizations and agencies belonging to the UN system, as well as by governments of the member States and any other public or



private organization whose activities are related to the ecological environment. The role of NGOs, indigenous populations and inhabitants of the rural areas is particularly relevant for its implementation.

As had been the case with Jim Grant and the UNICEF Convention for the Rights of the Child and as is the case with 2015 Paris agreements on Climate Change, the Republican party in the USA did not sign the Programme of *Agenda 21*. Back then *the peoples* had no voice of their own. This is no longer the case. Today, in order to pay tribute to Maurice Strong and to all individuals and organizations that have worked in favour of a positive inter-generational legacy, a great clamour shall be raised to prevent any nation from not fulfilling its responsibilities, in view of the damage that would be caused to mother Earth and to human beings as a whole – which includes the descendants of those short-sighted who are and have been opposed to following precisely those rules whose breach could lead us to *the point of no return*.

Since 1992 Rio UNCED, there have been many conferences, meetings and mobilizations led by or involving Maurice Strong: in 1995 - *Social Development* in Copenhagen; in November 1996 *The Santa Cruz de la Sierra Declaration* with the participation of Al Gore, an event I had the opportunity to attend and which led many countries to agree to national and regional scale commitments; in 1997 - *Rio+5* at UN headquarters in New York; and the MDGs - Millennium Development Goals established by the United Nations Assembly in September 2000 for the 2000-2015 period, with eight main goals carefully chosen, although, once again, their implementation was poor due to the monetary and short-sighted neo-liberalism; and *Rio+10* in Johannesburg, South Africa, August-September 2002; and "Rio+20" in Rio 2012, on *The Future we Want ...* and in 2015 - the 17 SDGs – Sustainable Development Goals – for the 2015-2030 period and, of particular relevance, the Paris Agreements on Climate Change.

If the extravagant President Trump boycotts humanity, humanity should -now that *We, the peoples...* finally can express ourselves freely – boycott President Trump. From all points of view, it would be totally unacceptable if one sole country – with the half-hearted support of the plutocratic groups of the G7, G8, G20 – should be propelled by globalization supporters as alternate



MFS speaking at "Rio+20", UN Conference on Sustainable Development, 15 June 2012

forum in place of the United Nations. Such inhumane groups should not prevent humanity from undertaking its essential mission: to ensure a decent standard of living to each and every person without exception.

I have excluded from the important events that orbited around the personality of Maurice Strong, the meeting that concluded with the drafting of the *Earth Charter*, a Declaration that occupies a strategic position amongst the flagship documents of our time. It is a warning, a call for action and for collective responsibility. But it is particularly a reason for pride and hope. We should and must behave in a way that will allow us to build a sustainable and peaceful global society. This is how the document begins: „We stand at a critical moment in Earth's history, a time when humanity must choose its future. As the world becomes increasingly interdependent and fragile, the future at once holds great peril and great promise. To move forward we must recognize that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one human family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for

nature, universal human rights, economic justice, and a culture of peace."

The drafting team – coordinated by Steven Rockefeller – was formed by Mikhail Gorbachev, Ruud Lubbers and myself as Director General of UNESCO... and we were all persuaded that it would be a reference document that could be an inspiration for the ways of behaving and the lifestyles for the new century and millennium.

Strong had a meaningful life, a great deal of ups and downs along his corporate-governmental-philanthropic career, with the fluctuations that are typical of someone who believes that there are many things that can be modified and become more adequate for human dignity. He was a Canadian entrepreneur. He was Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations always in favour of a strong Organization of the United Nations, endowed with the adequate resources to effectively undertake its irreplaceable mission. During a period he was the Director of a Canadian Power Corporation authority, responsible for hiring James Wolfensohn, who would later be President of the World Bank. He also had a leading role as Director of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). During a given period he had many responsibilities at the same time, all related to the environment. The Rockefeller family was present in many of the sections of his path.

As Director General of UNESCO from 1987 to 1999 I had many opportunities to talk with him, to have an exchange of ideas, to make plans, to find common approaches. I have a special memory of Rio de Janeiro, Paris and Amsterdam at the presentation of the Earth Charter. We both agreed in the great potential influence that the Charter could have were it broadly publicized. Its study and implementation in all educational levels, parliaments and governments, remain a big challenge... and a reason for hoping that the great transition is still possible: the power of the word.

# Maurice Strong – This was a Man

Pachauri, Rajendra K.\*

It is so difficult to write about a towering personality and titan like Maurice Strong in a few hundred words. So, I will attempt to focus on the personal interaction I had with him, on the basis of which I hope I can present some aspects of his greatness as a human being and visionary leader where he certainly was without peer. I was familiar with the legend Maurice Strong before I first met him in the late 1980s. It was in 1990 when I was in Washington, DC for three months, carrying out a research assignment at the World Bank, that I also met Hanne, and was invited by her to spend a couple of days at their Colorado home. I was completely charmed by the spiritually charged ambience at that charming spot, an elevation of about 8000 feet where their home was located. While going around with her I was deeply moved by Hanne's involvement in promoting every major faith in the world. During our discussions, I got to learn more and more about the wonderful and multi-faceted personality that Maurice was, even though he was not present on that occasion.

I really got to spend time with Maurice in 1991 at the Diaoyutai Guest House in Beijing, where a major meeting was held, and at which a small group of foreigners, of which I was one, and a select group of high level Chinese officials participated. This meeting resulted in the launch of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development. It was there that I came to witness Maurice Strong's diplomatic skills. The purpose of the meeting was to provide China with high-level international expertise and advice on giving due place to environmental issues in China's development strategy. The Chinese government was understandably concerned about foreign interference with its ambitions for high economic growth and

---

\* Rajendra K. Pachauri, Chairman, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2002-2015).

suspicious about foreigners getting access to information and data that they regarded as largely confidential. Maurice was very effective in allaying their concerns and at the same time providing the high level foreign contingent an assurance that China would listen to sound advice from the outside world and use it with respect in its decision-making. It was there that I re-ceived hints of Maurice's appointment as the Secretary-General for the forthcoming Rio Summit of 1992.

To my mind the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was the high point of Maurice Strong's sparkling career and the turning point in global development strategies and awareness on subjects related to sustainable development, climate change and loss of biodiversity. There has probably never been in the history of global activities an event as productive as UNCED, which gave birth to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and Agenda 21, which provided a roadmap for the world for to move along in a manner that ensures sustainable development. What was set out in Agenda 21 remains totally valid today, and in fact assumes greater relevance as the world continues to fail in implementing the letter and spirit of that seminal document.

The world knows Maurice Strong's brilliance, his organizational capabilities and his convening power, and these will continue to draw admiration far into the future. His work as a role model and a visionary with unique talents will never be lost to the world, and will in fact gain greater interest as the value of his contributions becomes more prominent in a historical context. But what may never get highlighted are the qualities that Maurice possessed as a human being and a friend – a friend for life. He had an eye for talent, and if he also liked a person who possessed intellectual and professional capabilities, he would go out of his way to see that opportunities were created for the advancement of the person in a range of global organizations. His recommendation carried enormous weight, and his rapport with those in positions of power gave him unusual clout in many international activities. One can count many persons who attained high positions in many international organizations purely through the support of Maurice Strong. On a personal note, I recall that in 1997 I saw him in Washington DC at a time when the position of

Director of Environment at the World Bank was becoming vacant. He pulled me into a quiet place, where he said that I should take that position, and that he was chairing the search committee for shortlisting candidates. I told him that I was not planning to move from where I was. But he would have none of that, and insisted that the position was just made for me, and that it would be good for my career growth. He said that I should think about it, while Maurice would dismiss my reluctance, and put together his committee's short list. I was worried that if he went to the extent of recommending me I would have to disappoint him by not showing any interest. Fortunately, the problem was solved because the White House intervened to give the job to someone else who had to be accommodated in a position within a multilateral organization for political reasons, and the World Bank vacancy came in handy. But Maurice's initiative in my case was typical of his large-heartedness and his qualities as a benefactor of those that he liked and thought well of.

To some extent Shakespeare's description of Julius Caesar, as expressed in the following lines applies to Maurice as well.

"His life was gentle; and the elements  
So mixed in him, that Nature might stand up  
And say to all the world, THIS WAS A MAN!"

All of these words are totally accurate in describing Maurice. Nature, in particular, would certainly pay tribute to this the most ardent lover of her bounty and beauty and, of course, with such a rare combination of qualities nature and human society at large should certainly say "This was a man." But his life was certainly not gentle, and if anything, it was tempestuous at times, confronted with several crises on numerous occasions. But therein lay Maurice's greatness!

Through it all he remained unflappable and intrepid, never once losing his sense of purpose and a positive approach to life. In that respect, there is as much to learn from his successes as from his failures, if one could even use the word in connection with anything that happened in Maurice's life. He always remained on top, and nothing would dent his indomitable spirit. To that extent he was the perfect model of what Nelson Mandela always referred to when he said: "Do not judge me by my

successes, judge me by how many times I fell down and got back up again."

I will never forget the last time I saw Maurice. I had gone to Beijing on work, and knowing that Maurice was spending most of his time then in that city, I got in touch with him. He invited me over to lunch, and suggested that I give a seminar to some of the faculty at Peking University, where I believe he had based himself. I accepted his invitation readily, and he was really happy to spend time with me, while embarrassing me by saying wonderful things about me to those who had gathered on the occasion. He was as always bright and effusive company, and displayed a sense of humor that I had not witnessed before. He was obviously in poor physical health, but none of that seemed to bother him. He was brilliantly articulate as always. However, I was concerned about his health, even though I never said anything about this subject.

A few months later I invited him to speak at our annual Delhi Sustainable Development Summit. He responded by saying that he would try to come if he was in fit condition to travel. In the end, he could not make it. Sadly, I never saw him or heard from him again. Then came the news that he had left this world, yet I felt convinced that Maurice as a human being and as an icon really would live on forever, not merely in the hearts of those who had the unique privilege of knowing him, but also those who will read about him, his life, his contribution to this world and about what he stood for. Still, unless one can appreciate the towering personality of Maurice Strong, the warm and wonderful human being that he was, there would be something missing in understanding what a gift to humanity that he was. Those of us who were fortunate to partake of that gift should feel blessed, and tell the world that the one visionary leader, who straddled two centuries and awakened human society to the basic imperatives of sustainable development on this planet, was also a human being of rare distinction.

# Memories of Maurice Strong

Preston, John T.\*

When I met Maurice Strong in 1988, he was planning the environmental summit in Rio. Maurice could already see that *business as usual* would have serious environmental consequences. At that time, I was overseeing the inventions and technology commercialization for the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). MIT has had enormous success in converting technology into successful businesses and the office I founded in 1986 at MIT was greatly accelerating the creation of new companies. By 2014 a study by Professor Roberts showed that MIT Alumni founded companies have revenues equal to the 10<sup>th</sup> largest economy of the world (between Russia 9<sup>th</sup> and India 10<sup>th</sup>). The first sentence from Maurice Strong as we shook hands was: "So what is MIT doing to address the environmental problem." Clearly, he was also asking me what I was doing for the environment.

This question has stuck with me for the next 29 years and has guided my actions. Indeed, Maurice changed my life forever with that question. The words in the question were not as significant as the emotion and sincerity on Maurice's face. Although MIT was at the forefront of technology in all fields in 1988, it had only scattered efforts in what we consider today to be sustainable energy. These projects, however, exceeded those at nearly every other academic institution. One of my favorites was a passive solar home that MIT engineers built next to the athletic field to demonstrate the ability to heat a home in the cold New England winters using only solar radiation. The 29 years since I met Maurice have seen a major upsurge in MIT's research in sustainable technologies resulting in what I estimate to be more than a hundred new companies. These companies today provide

---

\* John T. Preston, Entrepreneur and former Director of Technology Licensing and Technology Development, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.



products and services that lower emissions, reduce raw materials, and purify or desalinate water.

Maurice was a combination of a passionate advocate as well as a pragmatist. He knew that in order for an environmental solution to be adopted, it must also have an economic advantage. He saw two ways for this to happen – through legislation or through innovation. The first approach involves regulators forcing polluting practices to pay a price or alternatively to put polluting practices at a disadvantage relative to non-polluting practices by giving an incentive or credit to the non-polluting practice. The second approach is development of technological innovation that enables non-polluting practices to be economically more attractive than polluting practices.

Although Maurice is best known for being a fierce advocate for legislative solutions and global treaties to mandate carbon limiting and sustainable legislation, he confided in me (on many occasions) that technology was his greatest hope. During the 90s and early 2000s Maurice and I met regularly either in New York, Boston or Canada – usually at his home at Lost Lake. Lost Lake meetings were the most pleasant because the serenity of unspoiled nature had a clear positive impact on Maurice – and on me too. Maurice started every day with meditation and the Canadian north woods on a beautiful lake likely yielded a better backdrop for meditation than New York City. Also, Lost Lake usually included family members – his wife Hannah or his sons Ken or Fred. Maurice clearly enjoyed being around his family.

During the 90s Maurice and I engaged in several business activities ranging from a company that spun out of Harvard focused on foods designed to help certain health ailments to one that developed a novel process for converting hazardous materials into benign products. Some of these companies succeeded and some failed, but in all cases, Maurice was quick to roll up his sleeves and help. Maurice was steel-willed with unwavering determination, which would have made him a tyrant were it not for the fact that he was one of the most pleasant and honest people I ever met. His pleasant demeanor and his determination were major contributors to his success. People wanted to follow Maurice both because they knew he was right about man's impact on the environment and because they liked him. These are wonderful attributes that we all should aspire to obtain.

Unfortunately, Maurice had his share of detractors. When the cost of change is perceived to be higher than the cost of business as usual, the entrenched interests have an incentive to attack the voice of change. Maurice was that voice. Even today, in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary, many people will argue that mankind is not influencing the environment and there is no carbon problem. One of my favorite quotes from Albert Einstein is: "Great spirits have always encountered violent opposition from mediocre minds." Indeed, Maurice was a great spirit who was attacked by mediocre minds. The attacks and the lies caused pain for Maurice, as well as his friends and family. Despite the harm such lies caused, Maurice never let himself be dragged down to the level of his detractors to address the lies. Instead, he plowed ahead with his more important mission.

In the early 2000s Ken Strong became increasingly involved in the business end of Maurice's life. This enabled me to have regular meetings with Ken and occasionally his brother Fred. Both Ken and Fred share their father's quick wit and determination to do good for the world. I greatly enjoy my time with Ken and Fred.

My last image of Maurice is from a warm summer day in New York City. He was in a light beige suit wearing a wide brimmed hat crossing 57<sup>th</sup> to join me for a lunch meeting. I could see by his gait that he had lost some of his normal spryness to age and diabetes. His steps were shorter than normal and more deliberate. Over lunch, however, his intellect was as sharp as ever. The lunch topics ranged from practical technologies – which benefit the environment and are moving into full-scale production – to the physics of dark energy and questions about the potential to ever harvest such energy.

When measuring Maurice's accomplishments one can miss the mark by looking only at the UN Environmental Summits and agreements between nations. Political agreements are nearly always mired in the complexity of politics. Today, 45 years after Maurice chaired the environmental summit in Stockholm, only part of the world has fully embraced the agenda Maurice promoted. This partial victory, however, is far more valuable than most people realize. We live in a global economy and products made today must sell everywhere. No automobile company will make a gas-guzzler for one market and a highly fuel efficient car for another market. The markets with the highest environmental

demands will drive corporations to innovate to make the best possible product – lowest polluting – as the only viable strategy to be a successful global business. I have been on many Boards of Directors of companies all of which are pushing for greater sustainability regardless of whether or not the local government has embraced global environmental treaties. At the end of the day, Maurice's greatest achievement is likely the influence he had on the trajectory of a myriad of people like me. People who today continue to seek solutions for sustainability. We must succeed for the sake of our children and grandchildren.

My 25 years professional development journey with Maurice Strong from discovering sustainable development to understanding the critical role of sustainable human beings to mobilizing social media towards establishing people-centered and action-oriented sustainability valleys would be a fitting tribute to deliver Maurice's legacy for a progressive and sustainable world.

# The One that Brings the Hope

Saul, John Ralston\*

When I first met and went to work for Maurice Strong in 1975, he had already broken out from his poverty stricken background; lived in the Arctic where he discovered that he sided with the Indigenous peoples; had become a business leader in spite of having no more than high school education; taken over a major and very Anglo holding company in Montreal, only to turn it over to Francophones and turn himself into a public servant. In Ottawa he created the Canadian International Development Agency, CIDA; in Stockholm the first real international environmental gathering, and in Nairobi the UN's first African based agency, which also formalized the worldwide nature of the environmental movement. He was 45 and only getting started.

In early 1976 I had been working for him for a few months. The Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau, had asked him to create and run the national oil company, Petro Canada. This was in the midst of the great oil crisis. We were on our way to the high Arctic to look at natural gas exploration sites.

I don't think it was clear to anyone how the world's leading environmentalist was going to reconvert himself into an oil man, without betraying what he stood for. In a way the industry didn't care. They already considered him a traitor (what else could an environmentalist be). The idea of a state owned oil company was a double betrayal. In oil industry terms, this was communism. He had hired me as an assistant. The first job he gave me was to rent an office tower for Petro-Canada in Calgary, where the oil industry was centred. I found a reasonably nice red brick building. Industry leaders immediately named it Red Square.

---

\* John Ralston Saul, assistant to Maurice Strong from 1976 -1978, is President Emeritus of PEN International and Co-founder and Co-Chair of The Institute for Canadian Citizenship.. He is the author of *Voltaire's Bastards: The Dictatorship of Reason in the West*, which is dedicated to Maurice Strong.

I watched as Maurice created Petro-Canada out of nothing, with little federal government funding. He had a remarkable way of using highly imaginative structures to change difficult situations. For example, the big corporations always had a VP "Environmental and Indian Affairs." It was always a lawyer and their job was to fight off the environmentalists and the Indians once the corporation had polluted or stolen some land. Maurice simply changed the checklist Petro-Canada's board of directors had to go through before approving an exploration or production deal. He added environmental concerns and Indigenous rights to the checklist. Since every deal was done in cooperation with other companies, they had to follow suit. It was the beginning of unwilling change in the industry. Of course, we are still far from where we need to be, even today. But it was a first step in a complex battle.

As I mentioned earlier, we were flying to the high Arctic late in the winter of 1976. There were no regular flights beyond Inuvik at the mouth of the Mackenzie River. We spent the night there before getting in a Twin Otter the next morning.

That night changed my life. Maurice would manage to do it several times over the years. He had set up a meeting with the local hunting and trapping societies – the organizations of the local Indigenous nations. In this case there were three – the Inuvialuit, the Dene and the Gwich'in. I was your average overeducated young Canadian. Twenty-nine with a PhD, yet I had never been taught anything about the reality of the Indigenous peoples, and so was worse than ignorant. I went into the meeting with that ignorance and a lot of good will – the worst of romanticism. A dangerous combination. Fortunately, as a mere assistant, it wasn't my place to talk. I listened to the Indigenous leaders and Maurice enter into a complex discussion about the north, the environment, oil and gas, southern style development and Indigenous concepts of what could, should and should not be done. These were men with less western style education than Maurice, far less than me. But the concepts they and he were using were far more interesting and complicated than the simplistic western style arguments over who owns what; the difference between stability and economic development; jobs and payoffs. They were talking instead about the relationship between place and people. And people were not in the European Platonist position of control. It was listening to them and to Maurice, which

set me off on a long rethinking of how we must reimagine and reorganize our sense of society and of action.

\* \* \*

A little later that same year a conversation between Fidel Castro and Pierre Trudeau led to Maurice being sent off to Hanoi with a double mission: to organize advice for the Vietnamese offshore oil exploration industry and to recover the Canadian offshore exploration blocks which had been seized at the end of the war between North and South Vietnam. It was a secret mission. And Hanoi was a complex place to get to. The bridges had been bombed out. The two airports were a mass of craters. There was one rough landing strip. The only way to get there was through Beijing.

The first thing I saw in China was the astonishing respect the leaders had for Maurice. As part of the Stockholm Conference, he had convinced them to join the environmental process. We all know that for many years there was a brutal contradiction between China's old-fashioned desire for development (a heavily polluting development) and the environmental needs of their country and the planet.

Over his last decade, Maurice spent a good part of each year in Beijing advising the government on how to find a way around this difficult corner. He deserves a lot of credit for the progress now being made.

Once we got to Hanoi, what I witnessed were his remarkable negotiating skills and his ability to give people hope. As the days went by, in meeting after meeting, in rundown buildings which had survived the bombings, he gradually expanded the original narrow brief which Trudeau had given him. He saw an opening to re-establish normalized east/west relations via a broad set of agreements from which everyone would benefit. And so he negotiated an agreement!

But on the way home we were spotted by journalists in the Beijing Hotel and by the time we landed in Ottawa with this remarkable political and economic document, word had leaked out.

Washington simply wasn't ready for reengagement with Vietnam. They were licking their wounds from a lost war and so attacked the Canadian government for betraying the West. Ottawa was not in the mood for a political fight with its big neighbour.

Instead, everyone turned on Maurice. But he was a seasoned in-fighter, who was never panicked by this sort of situation. Years later he was asked by the UN to quietly intervene in North Korea. Quickly he began to find narrow openings for negotiation. But again, there was no appetite for this kind of diplomacy in places like Seoul and Washington. In the case of Hanoi, he and I went down to the American capital to try to explain (he did the explaining) what the possibilities were and how the United States would benefit. It didn't work. He wasn't surprised. But years would be lost before the US was ready to re-engage. And even then it had to be on their economic and political terms. One of the outcomes was the reinforcement of an authoritarian regime, which was still in place.

\* \* \*

I worked for Maurice for three exhausting, exhilarating years. The kind of years in which your life patterns are set. Much of the time you are trying to understand what you have learnt. Much of my writing has at its roots on the ideas and methods which came from him. Over the decades which followed, we would get together whenever we could and I would try to keep up with what he had been doing.

In 1984 he was asked to come back to the United Nations to help deal with the famine emergency in Ethiopia. In fact, as he kept arguing, it was a crisis affecting much of Africa. There were campaigns around the world to raise money and send food. As many as 30 million people were thought to be in danger of death.

Maurice went on a relentless campaign and raised most of the tens of millions needed.

Soon there was more than enough food. The problem was that it couldn't be delivered to the starving. There was a war going on. The government of Ethiopia either blocked the food or seized it for their army. Maurice then plunged into a profoundly moral struggle. He was determined, somehow, to force President Mengistu Haile Mariam to let the food through. I have heard many descriptions from others of Maurice pounding on the dictator's desk in fury.

In the midst of all of this, I met him in Paris. He had flown from Addis Ababa to Cairo, spent the night sleeping on a bench in the airport, and flown on to Paris for a major fundraising meeting.

Somehow, he both raised the money and persuaded the Ethiopian government to co-operate. The food began to find its way.

Maurice was a mythical figure, bursting with energy and highly original ideas. Perhaps most important, he would have a clear sense of how to carry out those ideas. Unlike so many public figures there was always something startlingly raw and real about him.

\* \* \*

We should never forget that he was brought in late - very, very late - to save the first major United Nations global initiative on the environment. He did love the United Nations and all it promised! He never gave up on the possibility that there were new ways for nations which disagreed with each other on the political front to work together. He would have been a dream Secretary-General, but he was too smart and too effective for that ever to be a possibility.

In any case, he was brought in to save - as it turned out, to create - the Stockholm Conference of 1972. He used his CIDA lens - he who had created CIDA - to rethink the environmental idea and to convince the reluctant countries with developing economies to join in. He turned Stockholm into the founding moment of the international environment movement. He led the way from Stockholm to UNEP. And from UNEP to Rio. And out of Rio came the structures to launch the COP's process. And out of that came Kyoto. And now Paris.

For more than two decades Maurice Strong was the leader and the convener of the environmental movement. So many others have contributed and many more must now do much more.

But it was Maurice Strong, with his astonishing imagination, his way of conceptualizing and reconceptualising ideas, his magical sense of diplomacy, his completely unconventional, but effective talent for management that turned environmentalism into an international reality. Environmentalism has had many true believers, many saints, many martyrs. But Maurice Strong was indeed the Saint Paul of the international environment movement. He pulled it all together. He gave it shape. He gave it a strategy. He changed all of us. He changed the way the world sees what is possible, what is urgent, what can be done.



# Maurice Strong and the Earth Charter

Steven C. Rockefeller

Throughout Maurice Strong's extraordinary career as a leader of the international environmental and sustainable development movement, one fundamental challenge that he persistently endeavored to address was achieving international agreement on the ethical values and basic principles that should guide people and governments in protecting nature and building a better world for all. The challenge involved constructing for international sustainable development law the kind of foundation that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights provides human rights law. Strong's efforts in this regard began in 1972 with organizing and overseeing the drafting of the Stockholm Declaration as the Secretary-General of the first United Nations Intergovernmental Conference on the Environment. His endeavors culminated during the 1990s with the Earth Charter initiative that he started as Secretary-General of the Rio Earth Summit and carried forward as the leader of a path breaking civil society project. I came to know and work with Maurice Strong over a five year period as a participant in the Earth Charter initiative, first as a member of a steering committee and later as chair of the Earth Charter international drafting committee. It turned out to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. There follow some reflections on Strong's exceptional, farsighted leadership.

When the Secretary-General of the United Nations, U Thant, invited Strong in 1970 to head up the UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, Strong was 40 years old. He had become an accomplished Canadian business leader and was serving as President of the Canadian International Development Agency, which had taken him into the world of international relations that had long been a special interest. As a boy growing up in rural Manitoba during the Great Depression, Strong had found in the natural world a refuge from the poverty that afflicted his family and local community, and he had built a spiritual relation with

nature that stayed with him. As a consequence he was quick to appreciate the significance of the environmental movement that was rapidly taking form in North America following publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* in 1964. He saw U Thant's invitation as a unique opportunity to integrate his interest in the natural environment with his work promoting international cooperation and development.<sup>1</sup>

Following the Stockholm Conference Strong remained engaged in helping to build the international environmental movement. In the mid-1980s, he became a member of the World Commission on Environment and Development. The Commission's report, *Our Common Future*, put the concept of sustainable development on the international agenda, and it included a recommendation that a new universal declaration or charter be drafted with the ethical imperatives and basic principles to guide a worldwide transition to a sustainable future.<sup>2</sup>

When Strong was appointed the Secretary-General of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Rio Earth Summit, he, therefore, made adoption of an Earth Charter a major goal of the conference. However, at the Summit governments were not able to reach agreement on principles for the Earth Charter that he and others had envisioned. Differences between the North and the South could not be bridged. Strong was deeply disappointed by this turn of events, but he was not one to give in to pessimism or to give up on what he viewed as an urgent and critical need.<sup>3</sup>

Following the Summit, he created the Earth Council to pursue the unfinished business of the Summit and to empower civil society to promote sustainable development.<sup>4</sup> The drafting of the Earth Charter very quickly became a high priority of the Council. Further, Strong understood that governments were preoccupied

---

<sup>1</sup> Maurice Strong, *Where On Earth Are We Going?* (Canada: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000), pp. 45-53, 100-106, 115-118.

<sup>2</sup> *Our Common Future* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 332

<sup>3</sup> "The Earth Charter Initiative: A Proposed Joint Initiative of the Earth Council and Green Cross International, The Hague, April 16, 1994," pp.11-12. Steven Rockefeller Private Papers. Strong, *Where On Earth Are We Going?*, pp. 187-188, 193-194, 212-213.

<sup>4</sup> See 1994 brochure on founding of Earth Council and newsletter on Earth Council *Background, Program, and Structure*. Steven Rockefeller Private Papers.

with short-term goals and economic development, and they had no interest in participating in another round of negotiations on principles for sustainable development. Therefore, in a dramatic departure from traditional UN practice, he decided to launch a new Earth Charter consultation and drafting process as a civil society initiative. Thousands of NGO leaders had participated in the Rio Earth Summit through the Global Forum, and they had generated over forty peoples treaties, including an Earth Charter, and Strong knew there would be wide support in the emerging global civil society for his Earth Charter project. The long-term goal was to seek endorsement of the proposed new Peoples Earth Charter by the United Nations General Assembly.

Strong's commitment to this innovative undertaking reflects his deep personal belief that a fundamental shift in attitudes and values is essential if humanity is to change course, eradicate poverty, and halt the progressive degradation of Earth's ecosystems. He recognized that arguments based on science and reason alone are not sufficient to motivate society to pursue real change. Spiritual vision and ethical commitment are needed. The goal must be to change hearts as well as minds. In addition, Strong believed that only mounting pressure from civil society throughout the world would generate the political will in governments to implement a transition to sustainability. Drafting the Earth Charter as a peoples treaty supported by a worldwide, inclusive consultation process was one way of mobilizing civil society to pressure governments and business. Strong knew that the international consultation process was going to be as important as the final product.

In his drive to create the Earth Charter, Strong was also guided by a conviction that at the foundation of the world's great religions are universal spiritual and ethical values and that clarifying and elevating these shared values is essential to ending the conflict between the religions and promoting non-violence and peace. As he explains in his autobiography, "I have always seen that the innate spirituality of people, and the common values they share, are the essential foundations for a peaceful, cooperative world."<sup>1</sup> As the world becomes ever more interconnected and interdependent, the need for shared values and cooperation

---

<sup>1</sup> Strong, *Where On Earth Are We Going?*, p. 181.

becomes increasingly urgent, and Strong saw the Earth Charter as an instrument, like the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, for giving expression to universal values and inspiring collaboration and peace.

One of the most remarkable things about Strong's extraordinary life is the vast international network of friends and colleagues from the worlds of business, government, and civil society that he built up over the years. Drawing on this network, he was able to attract and assemble an outstanding team of dedicated, talented women and men to advance the Earth Charter project. Among those who joined him as partners were Mikhail Gorbachev and the twenty-three members of the Earth Charter Commission, who represented Africa and the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America. A skilled diplomat and master convener and organizer, Strong deeply appreciated cultural diversity, including the wisdom of indigenous peoples, and he thoroughly enjoyed working with women and men from many different cultures and nations.

It was Strong's personal leadership coupled with the leadership of Gorbachev and the Commission that provided the undertaking with credibility globally and a unique prominence among civil society initiatives. All over the world, people were paying attention and were more than willing to participate and help. I will always be profoundly grateful to Maurice Strong for giving me the opportunity to be part of this visionary initiative and to work with him and the many caring, committed women and men who served on the Commission and who supported and participated in the consultation and drafting process.

This carefully planned and orchestrated undertaking took place over a five year period from 1995 to 2000, and it was far and away the most inclusive and participatory process ever associated with the creation of an international declaration. Thousands of individuals and hundreds of organizations from around the world were involved. There has never been anything like this before or since. It is this inclusive process that is the primary source of the authority and legitimacy of the Charter as a declaration on global interdependence and shared values for building a just, sustainable, and peaceful world community. It is also very

important that the Earth Charter principles build on and extend international law.<sup>1</sup>

Since the launch of the Earth Charter in June 2000 at the Peace Palace in The Hague, it has been translated into over forty-five languages and endorsed by over 6,000 organizations world wide, including UNESCO in 2003 and the World Conservation Union (IUCN) in 2004 and 2016. Hundreds of cities have endorsed the Charter and used it as a planning guide. In 2015 Pope Francis endorsed and quoted from the Earth Charter in his Encyclical Letter, "*Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home."<sup>2</sup> Today many international law scholars regard the Earth Charter as a soft law document, and its stature and influence in the world of international law continues to grow. The Earth Charter is widely used as a teaching tool in schools, colleges, and universities. Hundreds of essays on the document have been published in books and journals.

The United Nations General Assembly has never endorsed a document that it did not write, and to date it has not formally recognized the Earth Charter. However, the Johannesburg Declaration issued by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10) uses language from the Preamble of the Earth Charter when it affirms the inclusive ethical vision in the Charter, stating that: "...we declare, through the Plan of Implementation and this Declaration, our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to our children."<sup>3</sup> Further, the Earth Charter had a significant influence on the construction of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted in 2015 as the centerpiece of the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable

---

1 For more information on the drafting process and commentary on the Earth Charter, see Steven Rockefeller, "Ecological and Social Responsibility: the Making of the Earth Charter" in Barbara Darling-Smith, ed., *Responsibility* (New York: Lexington Books, 2007), pp. 179-197; S. Rockefeller, "Crafting Principles for the Earth Charter" in P.B. Corcoran and J.A. Wohlpart, eds., *A Voice for Earth; American Writers Respond to the Earth Charter* (London: University of Georgia Press, 2008), pp. 3-23; and "Earth Charter Briefing Book" issued by the Earth Charter secretariat and drafting committee at the time of the launch of the Earth Charter in June 2000.

2 "*Laudato Si'*: On Care for Our Common Home," Paragraph 207.

3 Johannesburg Declaration, Paragraph 6. The related wording in the Preamble of the Earth Charter is the following: "...it is imperative that we, the peoples of Earth, declare our responsibility to one another, to the greater community of life, and to future generations."

Development. Like the sixteen Earth Charter principles, each of the seventeen SDGs begins with a verb and is crafted as a call to action, and adoption of the SDGs by the United Nations is a major step toward recognition and implementation of the Earth Charter's ethical vision.<sup>1</sup>

When the history of the second half of the twentieth century is written, one positive achievement that should be recognized and celebrated is the progress that governments and civil society made in clarifying and agreeing upon universal ethical and spiritual values. In this regard, the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration for Human Rights, and the Earth Charter are especially significant documents. They set forth an inclusive vision of solidarity and community and of universal rights and responsibilities that forms the new global ethic so urgently needed if humanity is to build a just, sustainable, and peaceful world. The vision all too often goes unheeded, but it stands as a source of inspiration, guidance, and hope. All who care about human wellbeing and the future of life on Earth owe to Maurice Strong our deepest appreciation and gratitude for his dedication and inspired, creative leadership in the development of a planetary ethic and promotion of international cooperation.

---

1 Steven Rockefeller, *Democratic Equality, Economic Inequality, and the Earth Charter* (San Jose, Costa Rica: Earth Charter International, 2015), pp. 46-47, 61-68.

# Maurice Strong, his hopes and commitments

Savio, Roberto\*

It is ironic that this book dedicated to Maurice, with contributions by his friends from different parts of the world and different walk of life, comes out in the moment we have discovered that the measure of CO<sub>2</sub> in the environment has already surpassed the 455 PPM mark, a measure which was considered an impassable threshold for the survival of our planet.

It is now clear that while the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference held in Paris was a giant expression of public goodwill, it lacked the efforts necessary to implement its recommendations. Of course, we should not forget that the conference was seriously flawed from a scientific viewpoint. In order to save the planet as we know it, that conference established an increase of 2°C over the temperature recorded in 1848 at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution as the target to aim for, although scientific consensus put the increase at 1.5°C. This decision – a little known dirty secret – was the result of a diplomatic effort to erect a tent as large as possible to accommodate all sides. Well, we are now at 1.8°C and if action is not taken, as things are according to UNEP, we could even risk an increase of 6°C, which would represent a dramatically irreversible change.

Well, this is a good example of how political agreements do not have the power to change reality. We are heading for a disaster as if nothing is happening. Moreover, we now have Mr Donald Trump – President of the country which created multilateral institutions and heralded the concepts of peace and development as the basis for international relations – who has branded climate change “a Chinese hoax” and announced the withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Agreement.

---

\* Roberto Savio is IPS President Emeritus, Director for International Relations and Cooperation ECPD University for Peace UN

The Paris conference was in good measure the outcome of Maurice's lifetime commitment to saving our planet from negative climate change. Maurice considered the path to global agreement blocked by the mutually convenient discharging of responsibilities between the U.S. Congress and China. The United States refused to be part of any environment agreement until China – considered the world's worst polluter – assumed its responsibilities and made sacrifices. China, on behalf of the Third World, maintained that if we are threatened by climate change, it is because the rich countries have polluted at will for nearly two centuries in order to maintain their industrial growth, and they are therefore responsible for the situation. Demanding that limits be placed on growth was thus seen as an act of selfishness, and actually a way to block the development of China, India and other Third World countries.

Maurice faced this issue in his typical manner: taking action. He moved to China, where created a web of personal relations and promoted the setting up of the Club of Beijing, in which the issue of climate change was the main point of discussion. I met him in Beijing and was deeply impressed on the net that he was able to wave, and how he was able to update on the political changes and actors. He did a lot of preparation on an agreement between Washington and Beijing, which was finally made visible during Obama's visit to China. The fact that China was willing to join the effort for climate control left the US Congress without foundations. It could no longer oppose an agreement on the grounds that China was not joining. And the real masters of fox-like defence, such as the Koch Brothers and other representative of the coal and petrol sectors, were suddenly visible and without cover.

The Paris Conference was the final act of a process started in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, with the UN Conference on Environment and Development, the first summit of Heads of State on the issue of the environment. Incidentally, two of the men who masterminded the Rio Summit have since passed away: Maurice and former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros Ghali.

It is also worth recalling that for the first time ever, Maurice – who spent all his life making environment a central issue – opened up the conference to representatives of civil society, beyond governmental delegations. Over 20.000 organisations, academics and activist went to Rio, starting the creation of a global civil society recognised by the international community.



In 1997, as a result of Rio Conference, the Kyoto Treaty was adopted, with the aim of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The results over nearly two decades between Rio and Paris have been very modest. Coal extraction fell from 45.05 percent in 1950 to 28.64 percent in 2016, also as a result of new technologies, but oil extraction increased from 19.46 to 33.91 percent in the same period and renewables were a negligible reality. So Paris was left with a very urgent task, with two decades having already been lost. According to the World Bank, in 2014 there were over one billion people without electricity, and in Africa only 20 people of people had access to electricity. Renewable energy needs to be provided for all these people in order to avoid a dramatic increase in CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

Paris was supposed to come up with a really global agreement, unlike Tokyo. It did not and now we are at the point where, according to the scientific community, if the international community does not agree on a rapid about-turn, we face the dramatic possibility of making a large part of the earth uninhabitable. In fact, in the last four years we had the hottest summers since 1850, and in 2017 we had the highest record of greenhouse emissions in history: an amazing 41.5 gigatons. Ninety percent of those are the result of human action, while renewables (the cost of which has now become competitive with fossil fuels) still cover only 18 percent of the energy consumed in the world.

And here comes another important dirty secret: while we talk about how to reduce the use of fossil fuels, we are doing the very opposite. At this very moment, we spend 10 million dollars per minute to subsidise the fossil fuels industry. Just counting direct subsidies, these amount to between 775 billion and 1 trillion dollars, according to the United Nations. The official figure for the G20 countries alone is 444 billion dollars. But then the International Monetary Fund accepted the economists' view that subsidies are not only cash: they include use of the earth and society, like destruction of soil, use of water, and political tariffs (the so-called externalities, the costs which exist but are external to corporate budgets). From this point of view, we reach the staggering amount of 5.3 trillion dollars, compared with 4.9 trillion in 2013. That is 6.5 percent of global Gross National Product and is what it costs governments, society and the earth to use fossil fuels.

What is more striking is that while we are racing toward a climate change that will alter our planet as we have known it,

this suicidal run is not only being ignored by governments, which answer to a number of pressures, but by the very people who will be the victims.

In 2015, the United Nations conducted an extensive poll, with the participation of 9.7 million people. They were asked to choose their six priority issues from a list of 16, where the first issue on the list was "climate change." Well, the top issue chosen, with 6.5 million preferences, was "a good education." The second and third, with over 5 million preferences, were "a better health system", and "better opportunities for work." The last of the 16 issues chosen, with less than 2 million preferences, was "climate change." And this choice was also reflected in the preferences of the least developed countries, which are going to be the major victims of climate change. The 4.3 million poorest participants from the least developed countries again placed education first (3 million preferences); climate change came last, with 561,000 preferences ... not even in Polynesia, Micronesia and Melanesia, which could disappear, was climate change the leading choice. This is ample proof that people do not realise that we are at the threshold of survival of our planet.

In a sense, it is just as well that Maurice left us while the impetus behind Paris made everybody happy and full of hope. I must admit that I am very sceptical that the story will have a happy ending. While President Trump experiences domestic resistance in states and towns that will reduce his ability to make the Brothers Koch and other fossil fuel interests completely satisfied, he will be a very good excuse for the oil and coal producing countries to go ahead with business as usual.

On the other hand, it is a fact that Maurice would have fought on behalf of all the friends that have come together to pay homage to him in this book. And this is what is missing sorely today: a champion for the planet, a unique mix of politician, businessman and scientifically competent individual who would push, convince and rally people from all over the world.

Since I decided to bring his friends together in this book, things have not changed for the better, but what we can do is publish a book, where each one of us with our own view keeps Maurice Strong alive. Through this large and colourful tapestry, we will see how Maurice was a complex and sophisticated leader ... and I hope this book will serve especially to young people (for whom it is intended) to see that it is possible to believe, fight and change the world.

# My 25 Years Journey of Sustainable Development with Maurice Strong

Shah, Mahendra\*

Maurice Strong was a humane man with vision, integrity and commitment for sustainable development; qualities that empowered him to take on environmental, social and economic challenges the world has seen over the last half-century and which continue to be more and more critical today.

Over a period of 25 years, I had the privilege to work closely with Maurice in a wide range of challenging assignments, including humanitarian aid, rehabilitation and reconstruction, sustainable development, climate change and agricultural research, food security and biofuels.

In the summer of 1984, Maurice phoned me in Vienna and suggested we meet at the Hotel Forum in Rome. At the meeting he made a *strong* plea for me to join the United Nations Office for Emergency Operations in Africa (OEOA). I informed Maurice that I was not in a position to join as I was in the midst of completing an UNFPA-FAO study on the Population Supporting Capacity of the World. When lives were at stake, his conscience would not easily take no for an answer. In typical Maurice fashion, he bid me farewell with the words, "I look forward to seeing you soon."

In October 1984, Maurice invited me to the African Emergency Donors meeting in Geneva. He introduced me to Bradford Morse, Director of OEOA. Brad took me aside, put his arm on my shoulder and said: "come, I want you to meet someone." He took me to a circle of men in grey suits, and said to one of them: "George, you have just come back from the Sudan and

---

\* Mahendra Shah is a senior scientist with the Food and Agriculture Programme at IIASA. He was Executive Secretary to the CGIAR System Review at the World Bank and a Special Advisor to the Secretary-General of UNCED (1991-92).

seen the task we have ahead of us. This is Mahendra who is going to put in place the emergency relief aid information system." "George" was the Vice-President of the United States. Instantly I realized that the OEEOA would have the political will to respond to the famine crisis. I accepted the invitation to join the OEEOA.

As Director of the Information and Planning Division, I had the responsibility to coordinate a monthly report on the evolving emergency in each of the 35 affected countries. The report was prepared and distributed worldwide on the 28<sup>th</sup> day of each month. No matter where in the world Maurice was, he responded within 36 hours with substantive and politically sensitive comments that made the OEEOA the most credible and reliable source of the evolving famine emergency. It was truly an honour to work with a man whose sense of humanity effected real change in a timely manner, even in the most difficult circumstances.

In 1988 Maurice invited me to join the United Nations Office of the Coordinator for Afghanistan (UNOCA) in Geneva. As Director of Planning, the challenge ahead was to develop a rehabilitation and reconstruction plan for Afghanistan. One evening at dinner with Maurice, our discussion led to the simple but brilliant idea that rebuilding Afghanistan required a strategy to persuade the Afghan refugees to return to their places of origin. With the premise to help facilitate their return, we developed a rehabilitation and reconstruction plan that was welcomed by the international community. At UNOCA, I came to appreciate Maurice's bottomless humility and his great power of persuasion to help reach a consensus on action plans in international negotiations.

Six years later in 1991, Maurice asked me to join UNCED in Geneva with the responsibility to co-ordinate and prepare an Agenda 21 summary report for the Earth Summit in 1992. Maurice briefed me that we would be dealing with all United Nations agencies, governments as well as international and national stakeholders and hundreds of NGOs. He emphasized that the task for me was to summarize some 10000 pages of text agreed at various UNCED Prepcom meetings into a 100 page report that was scientific, credible, politically correct and persuasive.

The Agenda 21 summary report presented at the Earth Summit was greatly appreciated for its innovative topic and planning

presentation. It was endorsed unanimously at Rio. In many ways, this was Maurice's pinnacle contribution in environmental sustainability since he devised an action plan for securing the future for all, human and non-human species, that inhabit our one Earth. In 1997 Maurice was appointed Chairman of the CGIAR system review. The review was a response to a failure over three decades to mobilize the second green revolution. This mobilization was essential to meet the world's growing food needs, especially in the context of the growing ambitions of a private sector keen to secure intellectual property rights for food-seed varieties. Maurice said to me, "You have experience of world food-systems from your work at IIASA and FAO. I would like you to be the Executive Secretary of the independent CGIAR Review."

I found out later that senior management at CGIAR was not happy with Maurice's decision to appoint me. They said to Maurice: "there are many qualified candidates in the CGIAR and in the World Bank for the post of Executive Secretary. Mahendra Shah does not have this international negotiating experience." Maurice's promptly replied: "Yes, there are many we can appoint and you should do so, but in that case please also look for a more suitable Chairman." Needless to say I was appointed as Executive Secretary without discussion. At many CGIAR Review meetings, Maurice said few words and often appeared to be asleep but it was amazing that, without exception, he summarized meetings by giving a concise summary of what had been said and the unanimously acceptable conclusions. In 2000, Maurice and I published a World Bank Book publication, *Food in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, from Science to Sustainable agriculture*.

I returned to IIASA to work on a global assessment of the spatial impact of climate change on agriculture and food security. The fundamental result of our study was that the greatest impact of climate change on agriculture was likely to be in many developing countries, which had contributed little to the emission causes of climate change. I had the privilege to present our report, "Climate Change and Agricultural Vulnerability" at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development. Maurice phoned to congratulate me on the excellent response to our report in Johannesburg and also emphasized that it was the first time a non-UN publication was formally distributed to the official delegates in Johannesburg. I have no doubt that Maurice

had a hand in making this *unofficial report* officially distributed at the Johannesburg summit. In 2009, as Dean of the Young Scientists Summer Program at IIASA, I invited Maurice to come and give a talk to the IIASA young scientists summer program. Maurice replied within 24 hours from Beijing, "It will be a pleasure to come to YSSP 2009." The YSSP IIASA seminar was held at the Vienna Diplomatic Academy and was open to the diplomatic and scientific community in Vienna.

I did not expect Maurice to be aware of an ongoing scientific and political controversy at IIASA regarding a *Biofuels and Food Security* report that I had coauthored. This study report funded by the OPEC Fund for International Development had resulted in a senior council member country of IIASA requesting the IIASA management to stop the publication and release of this report. Their reasoning was that OPEC had influenced my co-authors and I to arrive at certain specific conclusions, which included: first generation biofuels that would result in greater food insecurity and no real emission savings would result from the use of biofuels. Yet not a single word in the 300-page report had been influenced or changed by OFID or OPEC management.

Maurice's public support and emphasis of my scientific and independent integrity at the meeting were timely. There was many a red face amongst IIASA management during Maurice's speech but the damage had already been done including the undermining of academic freedom of research. Our biofuels report is widely quoted by the scientific and policy research community and also became a subject of WikiLeaks. After this episode, I decided that the time had come to end my 17 years in scientific research.

Having worked on issues of sustainable development for almost four decades, I have come to the realization: that *there can be no sustainable development without sustainable human beings*. In 2006 I founded Zen Resort Bali, a place where I am developing holistic wellness systems that integrate traditional and modern medicine towards confronting the ailments and diseases of modern lifestyles; the latter I believe are the fundamental cause of unsustainable human health and environmental pollution.

I am currently involved in developing sustainability valley hubs bringing together practitioners of sustainability to practically

implement sustainable development agendas. The idea here is analogous to the amazing success in urban technology hubs around the world originating from the USA Silicon Valley. Achieving sustainable development is no longer an option but an imperative and we need to move from agenda setting to implementation.

I am forever grateful to Maurice for giving me the opportunity to work by his side for some 25 years. I am sad today that his embodied humanity, wisdom and kindness are no longer with us. But I know for sure that his exemplary spirit and commitment to a sustainable world is eternal. I will conclude with a quote dedicated to Maurice Strong,

“Embrace your humanity and grasp the hand of your neighbour; it is simple, just show that you care; Make the humane partnership and commitment for a sustainable development; and thus create a world of sustainable human beings.” Mahendra Shah, *Unsubscribemagazine*, 23 December 2017 Berlin

# Maurice Strong's other country, *Planet Earth*

Ramphal, Shridath\*

In early 1991, Maurice Strong had lunch with me at *The Athenaeum* in London. I was no longer Secretary-General of the Commonwealth; and he was now Secretary-General of the Earth Summit, leading with great dynamism a global preparatory process for the World Conference on Environment and Development at Rio in 1992. We talked about his preparations, which were monumental; and then he said; “*but there is one piece, Sonny, that is not in place. Barbara Ward and Rene Dubois had written ‘Only One Earth’ as the official book of the Stockholm Meeting 20 years ago – the intellectual underpinning of the global effort. I want you to do the same for Rio.* And he continued: *I want a presentation of the issues on the agenda of the Earth Summit that would be both a personal statement out of your varied experience and a worldview that took into account the perceptions of developing countries.* I knew Maurice well; I knew this was serious; I was absolutely stunned. My first reaction was that I was not equal to the task; to follow in the footsteps of Barbara Ward and Rene Dubois was altogether beyond my capacity. I pleaded as much to Maurice Strong; but he would not have it. “Of course, you can do it,” he said, “and, in fact, only you.” It was flattering, but was it true? In the end, like Gro Brundtland, Maurice Strong was hard to deny.

It was a new time for me; after 15 years of institutional support, I was on my own. There would be technical help, of course; so with *Only One Earth* before me as a beacon, I set to trying to provide a worthy sequel for Rio. I called it in the end: *Our Country, the Planet* and that was formally launched at the United Nations

---

\* Shridath Ramphal was Secretary-General of the Commonwealth (1975-1990). He worked closely with Strong as fellow members of World Commission on Environment and Development (1983-7). He was an Advisor to Strong at UNCED and his *Our Country, the Planet*, was the official book of the Summit.



in March 1992, before the Earth Summit. It was eventually published in several languages. It is not for me to say whether *Our Country, the Planet* fulfilled the high expectations of that lunchtime in London with Maurice Strong. I hope it did. But on the back cover of the book are two comments that I specially value. The first is by Elliott Richardson, former US Attorney General and Chairman of the UN Association of the United States:

*This book is impressive in its sweep, its depth, and the universal embrace of its compassion. It was written, moreover, with real eloquence. The reader who is not stirred to seek action must be one of those whom not even Mark Antony could have moved.*



MFS promotes the book "Our Country, the Planet", authored by Shridath Ramphal for UNCED, 5 June 1992

The other comment is by Gro Harlem Brundtland:

*Sir Shridath Ramphal's book sums it all up. Unless industrialized and developing countries join forces in a new more equitable international cooperation to save our endangered planet, we will all be in grave peril.*

They were encomiums that Maurice would have shared.

On the front cover of the book is the painting by the celebrated artist Robert Rauschenberg *Last Turn - Your Turn* donated as the official painting of the Earth Summit and, uniquely, as the cover

of *Our Country, the Planet*. Incorporated in the work is part of the worldwide pledge adopted by the *Earth Summit: I pledge to make the Earth a secure and hospitable home for present and future generations*.

A few years after the Earth Summit, I found myself in Patagonia, in southern Argentina, after a meeting in Buenos Aires. Wandering in that strange and desolate land, I came upon a craft shop and small collection of books in which to my amazement was a copy of *Nuestro Hogar el Planeta* – the Spanish translation in their collection Biblioteca de Ecología. I had not seen it before. I bought a copy and inscribed it: *'In Patagonia'*. The words that follow are taken from that Book that Maurice Strong inspired by his own life's work. I dedicate them to his memory:

*"Not till we are lost, in other words not till we have lost the world, do we begin to find ourselves and realize where we are and the infinite extent of our relations,"* wrote the great naturalist of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Henry David Thoreau. Some factors are unchanging. We have only one Earth. Our science may increase its bounty and our husbandry make its resources go further, but its capacity to support life cannot be indefinitely extended. On the eve of India's independence Mahatma Gandhi was asked if, after independence, India would attain British standards of living. His reply was prescient: *"It took Britain half the resources of this planet to achieve its prosperity. How many planets will a country like India require?"* If life on Earth is to be sustained, as I recalled in Barbara Ward's Memorial, we shall have to care for the planet, and share it, better than we have done. That is the essence of an enlightened response. But it will not come merely by our wishing for it. We are as we are; and it is being as we are that has brought us to this impasse.

Enlightenment precedes change. That should give us hope since it is our cerebral gift that most of all that sets us apart from other species. The same capacities that have borne the human race to great peaks of achievement have allowed it to adapt in the face of threats. Change must be driven by reason, yet it has to be guided by ethics as well. There is an ethical dimension to our predicament; there must be an ethical dimension to our response to it. Unless there is, the response will not be worthy of our highest potential as a species. We will not be true to ourselves, and we will be false to the generations that follow us.

*The desire for an ethical dimension to human conduct is of course not new; nor is it the preserve of minds not tuned to political realities. Over the centuries scores of great men have laid down a mosaic of ethical concepts treating with almost every aspect of human life. Yet, strangely enough... millions of persons the world over appear to be groping for new ethical guidelines as if they had never before been traced, or as if the old ones were no longer relevant... Men everywhere are now living under a new shadow of fear... It is no wonder that this is the anxious age and that we want an ethic for survival.*

Those were the words of another American, born a few generations later than Thoreau, the great statesman of the post-war period, Adlai Stevenson. He spoke them at the inauguration of a foundation in his name in New York in May 1961, when he was US ambassador to the UN. The fear of which he was speaking was the greatest fear of his time – *“the horrendous and universal implications of nuclear holocaust.”* Today, the new shadow of fear is cast far less by the possibility of a nuclear holocaust than by the prospect of environmental disaster; but the shadow is as menacing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as it was in the 20<sup>th</sup>. How much has changed, how much remains the same! For many, the age is just as anxious, the need for a survival ethic just as desperate.

As Adlai Stevenson acknowledged, the search for ethical guidelines for human endeavor is age-old. But it is my premise that never before in human history has the need for these guidelines been as great as it is now. The all-encompassing nature of the danger that faces us is beginning to be widely acknowledged; and in a strange reversal of the human predicament, the threat comes not from hostile forces of nature ranged against the human race, but from the power human genius has vouchsafed us over nature itself. The threat to human survival comes now from us. When we speak of survival today, we no longer mean – as in past ages – survival of family, of tribe, of race, of culture, or even of civilization. We mean, comprehensively, saving the human race from itself.

The ethical dimension of this predicament is inescapable. It was given poignant expression on 21 February 1990 in Washington by Vaclav Havel, just released from imprisonment for upholding freedom in then communist Czechoslovakia, in a moving

address to the US Congress. Among the many important things he said was the following:

*Without a global revolution in the sphere of human consciousness, nothing will change for the better in our being as humans, and the catastrophe toward which our world is headed... will be unavoidable... We are still incapable of understanding that the only genuine backbone of all our actions - if they are to be moral - is responsibility: responsibility to something higher than my family, my country, my firm, my success, responsibility to the order of being where all our actions are indelibly recorded and where, and only where, they will be properly judged.*

As we think of our responsibility to the planet, including our responsibility to ourselves, we must admit that it is only such a revolution in human consciousness that will provide the ethical impetus for change, and only change can set right our relationship with nature and secure our common future.

There are many sources of resistance to a revolution through which we would acknowledge responsibility to something higher than our country or ourselves. At each stage in our evolution, the impulse to mark out and possess turf has been as irresistible to us as to several other species. It was perhaps inevitable, therefore, that we evolved into a world of states separated by frontiers, and perhaps equally inevitable that the virtuous attributes we developed in the process of our evolution, like loyalty and solidarity, came to be expressed mainly in relation to our separate national communities. The great Cuban nationalist of the nineteenth century, Jose Marti, proclaimed "*para nosotros la patria es America Latina*" ("our country is Latin America"), and many Europeans today have a vision of a single European home; but regionalism of that kind is about as far as our allegiance now reaches.

In responding to the crisis of the environment, nothing would be more calamitous than for us to be influenced by considerations of otherness - the very opposite of the values necessary to create a global alliance for sustainable living. Without those values, without a sense of human identity transcending national loyalties, without an acknowledgment of others on the planet as fellow countrymen and women, without a conception of the world as one human community, we are unlikely to summon up

the will to act together to save ourselves. Without the ethics of survival to guide us, we are likely, when faced with disaster too close to be ignored, to try to save ourselves and leave others to their fate. In so doing, we would be overlooking the fact that their fate is ours too. We are bound together by a common destiny. We would be missing the crucial truth that we cannot save ourselves alone. An ethic of solidarity - moral underpinnings for joint action to save our endangered human family - cannot develop or subsist within a culture that allows otherness to head it.

Yet, *Our Common Future* (the Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development – of which Maurice Strong and I shared membership) – recognized that there are limits to this philosophy. As we reach toward new concepts of belonging we must temper our vision with realism, lest our reach too far exceeds our grasp. Bankers and businessmen may have reached the limits of geography in daily transactions that skirt the world, but the nation-state continues as the essential unit for the organization of human society and the conduct of its affairs and seems destined long to remain so. Recognizing this planet, as our country does not call for an end to nation-states; it is not premised on the replacement of national by global government; it does not mean we have to abandon human variety any more than national identity means smothering cultural heritages. That is why *Only One Earth* spoke of each of us having two countries, “our own and Planet Earth.”

Maurice Strong, ineluctably, had two countries: Canada and Planet Earth.

# Friends of Rio, Friends of Paris, Friends of Maurice Strong

Schwab, Klaus\*

*"Never accept that you can't make a difference, because if you can't make a difference you won't make a difference, and if you put a multiplier on that we will continue on an unsustainable pathway."  
Maurice Strong*

In 1972, Maurice Strong oversaw the Stockholm Conference on Human Development. This was just the year after I founded the World Economic Forum. I remember long conversations with Maurice during those early days of the World Economic Forum – or the European Economic Forum as it was then – and how struck I was by our similarities in outlook. The Second World War, notably the austerity before it due to economic depression and the effort it galvanized afterward for regional and global institution building, made a huge impression on both of us – Maurice as an increasingly successful businessman in North America, and me as a slightly younger business school professor and entrepreneur in Europe. Indeed, we saw the same need by the early 1970s to bring business, civil society and government together to address pressing economic and social issues.

Maurice, in particular, with his focus on environmental issues was ahead of most. He recognised the environmental truism that still prevails and frustrates today: that the economy and the environment are not two distinct systems; they are closely interconnected. With his ability to see environmental issues through two perspectives at the same time – that of a business and that of a government – he was an environmental visionary.

---

\* Klaus Schwab is Founder and Executive Chairman of World Economic Forum, International Organization for Public-Private Cooperation.

He saw the need to create conferences, platforms and collaborations that would bring the public, private and civil society sectors together- to shape common agendas that were both economic *and* environmental.

This is why I was delighted that Maurice chose to be a Foundation Board member of the World Economic Forum for so many years. He ensured that we could help support the 1972 Human Environment Conference and other important global environmental initiatives that Maurice was subsequently involved with, such as the creation of the United Nations Environment Program, the World Commission for Environment and Sustainable Development in 1983-87, the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 and his final appearance at the Rio+20 Summit in 2012.

In fact, I can share that in the run-up to the Rio+20 Summit Maurice encouraged the World Economic Forum to give full support to the Brazilian Ministerial Co-Chairs, who had expressed a desire to find innovative, multi-stakeholder mechanisms that could complement the official agenda for the then forthcoming Sustainable Development Goals. Maurice was, indeed, an entrepreneur in the global public interest who could sense an important opportunity. With Maurice's help the World Economic Forum supported several important inter-governmental and multi-stakeholder discussions ahead of the Rio+20 Summit at our regional meetings, including in Brazil, China, India and South Africa and at our Annual Meetings in Davos in January 2011 and again in January 2012.

During this period, many were anxious that Rio+20 might not have the same impact as the original 1992 Earth Summit. However, with his private sector mindset on delivery and innovation, Maurice was adamant that Rio+20 in 2012 could be a turning point, this time for public-private cooperation. He was right.

Despite being lauded as one of the primary architects of the global environmental framework that the 1992 Earth Summit created, such as the Framework Conventions on Biodiversity, Climate Change and Desertification, Maurice was famously not at all satisfied with progress two decades later on, regarding the follow-through on commitments agreed by Governments at the original Earth Summit. He argued that governments and international organisations, whilst central to setting goals and

targets to help shape the global agenda, couldn't be expected to deliver on such commitments alone. Rather, that all stakeholders – businesses, investors, civil-society groups, cities and other sub-national jurisdictions – should be encouraged to mobilize their various capacities, networks and value chains for innovation, expertise and resourcing and become part of a wider “delivery infrastructure” aligned with meeting, in this case, the new Sustainable Development Goals. With key economic actors working on innovative ways to deliver on internationally agreed goals or policy targets, Maurice felt that much value could be created for the economy and society. This was a core and consistent belief throughout his professional life. Rather than simply criticizing the lack of government commitment to overseas aid targets, like many others were doing, Maurice instead felt that Rio+20 provided the perfect opportunity to push a more innovative, multi-stakeholder agenda for delivery.

With the full support of the Brazilian Ministerial co-chairs of the Rio+20 Summit, an informal group was formed and supported by the World Economic Forum to explore these ideas and help shape an innovative agenda for public-private and civil society cooperation. Inspired by the suggestion of the Brazilian Ministerial Co-Chairs, this group became known as the “Friends of Rio+20.” It contained an unprecedented blend of leading business figures, leading academics and leading civil society champions. It also contained Maurice Strong. Together, the Friends of Rio+20 set out the framework for a new multi-stakeholder agenda for delivering on combined environment and development global actions. The Friends of Rio+20 also collated over forty case studies from around the world of successful large-scale alliances and action partnerships that offered examples of such action, covering many different issue areas. The multi-stakeholder Friends of Rio+20 group met with the Ministerial Co Chairs on the eve of the official meeting to discuss this agenda for enhanced public-private-civil society cooperation; and their ideas were also manifest in several multi-stakeholder dialogues that the Co-Chairs organised for the main program. It can be argued in hindsight, that these efforts helped for the first time to reshape an official global environment summit, where-by much of the significant discussion was felt to have taken place in multi-stakeholder meetings and workshops outside of the closed door official



governmental negotiations. Maurice's engagement, as the father of the original Earth Summit architecture, provided an important inter-generational blessing for this new agenda for cooperation: at Rio+20 he helped create, I would argue, a pivot toward the mainstreaming of public-private cooperation for action on environment and development matters that we see today.

It is of no coincidence in my mind that, three years after the Friends of Rio, the Government of France – the Chair of the 2015 Paris Climate meeting – with the support of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, invited the World Economic Forum to establish a "Friends of Climate Action" group. Similar to the model that Maurice helped bless for Rio+20, the Friends of Climate Action became an important platform in the run up to the 2015 Paris Climate Summit. It helped shape the public-private interface for the so-called climate "action agenda," bringing businesses, investor groups, civil society organisations and government/intergovernmental organisations together to forge and deepen a network of global multi-actor alliances and projects on climate change. Two years on from the Paris Summit the Friends of Climate Action, supported by the World Economic Forum's platform, remains a vibrant piece of connective tissue in the global climate agenda, helping governments and non-state actors connect, engage and drive forward innovation and action. To a great extent, this mechanism for on-going informal public private cooperation has also helped build resiliency into the climate agenda, as various political agenda's come and go. Which is just as Maurice said – that while government commitments can wax and wane, the global environment and economy agenda absolutely needs deeper and more sustained cooperation across all parties to ensure we deliver on what needs to be done.

To this end, I feel that the vision and agenda of Maurice Strong, someone I am proud to have been able to call a friend and mentor, is very much alive and hand-wired into the systems and platforms of the World Economic Forum as the International Institution for Public Private Cooperation. We are all Friends of Maurice Strong, and I am just sad that he cannot be with us today to see how his entrepreneurialism in the global public interest has inspired so many to act, and importantly, to act together in *friendship*.

# History will rightfully recognize Mr Strong

Thompson, William Irwin\*

Maurice Strong was the kind of person it was impossible to dislike. Although he dined with princes and supped with heads of state, he was unpretentious and presented himself disarmingly as a boy from the vast and open prairies of Manitoba. His accent was Canadian so you could not mistake him for an American from the Midwest. He didn't drop any famous names for you to stoop to pick up in a bow that established that he was the alpha male and you were the subdominant beta; instead his eyes gleamed in a warm smile and he seemed genuinely glad to meet you.

Maurice Strong became nationally known as the CEO of Petro Canada, but he had always been active in the United Nations as a young man and subsequently became an actor on the world stage by organizing the Stockholm Conference on the Environment in 1972, which was then followed by the founding of UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme). In contrast to today's deniers of climate change like President Trump and Vice President Pence, Strong was prescient in his understanding of ecology and complex dynamical systems. And for this foresight, he had been vilified in the Right Wing press by the apologists of industrial society and pollution as the con man who created the scam of climate change.

I first met Maurice and Hanne Strong at a conference on creating solar villages organized by John and Nancy Todd and held in Woods Hole, Massachusetts in 1979. Out of that conference, and because of the work of both Maurice and Hanne Strong, Crestone, Colorado arose from the ruins of a failed suburban

---

\* William Irwin Thompson is a retired cultural historian who taught at Cornell and MIT and was the founder of the Lindisfarne Association whose campus was in Crestone, Colorado at the invitation of Maurice Strong.

housing development to become the cultural and inter-religious center it is today.

History is too often a military narrative of war heroes: Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon or Eisenhower. The real history, however, of how we shifted – thanks to women – from foraging to agriculture, from agriculture to industry – thanks to men – and now from industry to ecology, thanks to couples like the Strongs and Todds, is silent and not shouted with flags waving in all the political hot air. President Trump will no doubt seek to continue to lead the military parade, but when the true story is written about how humanity moved from a warring and competing collection of industrial nation-states to a planetary culture, it will be a story in which Maurice and Hanne Strong are rightfully celebrated for their contributions.

# The art of articulating shared vision and global collaboration. A model of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century leader

Vilela, Mirian\*

The world is always in need of the type of exceptional leadership that can spark the creativity and engagement of people around the world to work for global social betterment, and Maurice F. Strong was such a leader. As a model of a 21<sup>st</sup> Century leader in the public service, he worked vigorously for decades in the high spheres of the United Nations system and the business and civil society sectors, sewing a culture of global collaboration with the goal of a more just, sustainable and peaceful world.

Maurice Strong was a global citizen in the sense that he perceived our planet as a global village with one community, and was committed to promoting a sense of responsibility for Earth and the wellbeing of all. He was among those who spearheaded understanding of the differentiated levels of responsibility required to address global interdependent challenges. As such, he was dedicated to elevating the importance of the principle of *Common, but Differentiated Responsibilities*, articulated in the Rio Declaration, and also in the *Earth Charter* Principle 2b – “Affirm that with increased freedom, knowledge, and power comes increased responsibility to promote the common good.” He tirelessly raised awareness on the value of “responsibility for the present and future well-being of the human family and the larger living world.” For instance, in 1992 he promoted the *Earth Pledge*, engaging governments and encouraging individuals around the world to “pledge to make this planet a more secure

---

\* Mirian Vilela is Executive Director of the Earth Charter International Secretariat and the Center for Education for Sustainable Development at the Upeace, and. Coordinator, UNESCO Chair on Education for Sustainable Development with the Earth Charter.

and hospitable home for present and future generations." This simple sentence encapsulated a new mental model that considers Earth as our home, and also embraces our responsibility towards future generations, which in itself serves as an educational tool for a paradigm shift.

In many ways, he could be seen as a systems thinker, always looking for the nexus between different areas of knowledge, making bridges between the interests of different groups, and finding strategic places to intervene in a system that would effectively influence the whole. A systems thinker considers the whole as well as the parts in a system and also the dynamic process of interactions with a long-term perspective. Mr. Strong was a forerunner in bringing a systemic approach to 21<sup>st</sup> century leadership.

I have had the privilege of working under Mr. Strong in three different settings: first at the UNCED Secretariat in Geneva, then at Earth Council in Costa Rica and later in the Global Earth Charter Initiative. Through our interactions in these contexts over a span of 20 years, I not only learnt a great deal but also developed deep respect and admiration for him. I would like to share some reflections on my learning and highlight the following three leadership characteristics I saw in him: vision, articulation and sensibility.

Mr. Strong not only had vision himself, but he was also able to articulate diverse interests to build a shared vision with others. He genuinely believed in the importance of engaging various actors across sectors, cultures and regions, and in many ways, he spearheaded the idea of good participatory governance. The now common practice of multi-stakeholder participatory processes of consultation was not always the norm. Bringing representatives of non-governmental organizations, indigenous people and the private sector to the table with governments to hear their perspective on a topic was a new approach at that time and many people still have trouble embracing it today. The section in Agenda 21 on "The Role of Major Groups" which has subsequently opened many possibilities, is due in great part to his capacity to envision new multi-stakeholder processes of decision-making. I can testify that he was always mindful to ensure that various stakeholders would be invited to the table, especially those who normally would not be invited, and made

them feel welcomed and valued in conversations related to their interests.

A natural diplomat, Mr. Strong was gifted with an exceptional ability to communicate with people from all walks of life. Without having gone through formal training in this field, he nevertheless was an outstanding natural expert in building and nurturing strategic relationships with various key actors in order to forge much-needed collaboration.

As the Secretary-General of the 1992 Earth Summit, founder of The Earth Council, The Earth Charter Initiative and many other great organizations and movements, he significantly influenced and initiated historical changes. He utilized his unique capacity in order to pull together the Earth Summit, envisioning it as an agenda for change and an occasion to shift the way nations did business.

Much of the success of the Summit, and its later effects, are due to his vision and ability to articulate goals for change, although he was always the first to remind others that he was not alone in those efforts. We must also put things into perspective here, remembering that the early 90s saw the end of the Cold War, as well as the emergence of strong globalization and democratization. Let us also remember that the Earth Summit was organized before the era of Internet, emails and social media, and it still had an unprecedented global impact (despite the fact that it was organized in a time when all invitations were sent by fax, one-by-one!). Mr. Strong's strategic approach to building support for the Earth Summit resulted in it receiving the kind of backing from government leaders and mass media that has rarely been seen since.

Following his role as a member of the Brundtland Commission and Secretary-General of the Earth Summit, Mr. Strong committed to a) further promote partnerships and collaboration across sectors, nations, civil society, and business, and b) carry the idea of an Earth Charter forward, (which was a recommendation made in the Brundtland Commission Report<sup>1</sup> and according to him, an unfinished piece of business of the Rio Earth Summit).

<sup>1</sup> The commission worked for three years from 1984 in a worldwide consultation to identify the major world challenges, its causes and effects, then launched the historical report "Our Common Future". The report recommended

In his opening address at the Earth Summit he expressed his hope that the Rio Declaration, which was to be approved at that occasion, would serve as the basis for an *Earth Charter*. In his closing address, he again voiced the need to advance beyond the Rio Declaration to the *Earth Charter* as follows:

*Let me mention some of the most important issues as I see them. The 27 principles of the 'Rio Declaration', building on the Stockholm Declaration, clearly represent a major step forward in establishing the basic-principles that must govern the conduct of nations and peoples towards each other and the Earth to ensure a secure and sustainable future. I recommend that you approve them in their present form and that they serve as a basis for future negotiation of an 'Earth Charter', which could be approved on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations. (United Nations General Assembly 1992. Maurice Strong opening speech at the Earth Summit)*

Although this was initially intended as a charter to guide states and interstate behaviour, as time went by the concept of such a charter was expanded. Mr. Strong saw the limitations of the official negotiation process among governments dominated by strong national interests, and so in 1994, he helped launch the Earth Charter Initiative, together with Mikhail Gorbachev, Ruud Lubbers and others, which was to focus on a civil society process.

It is important to consider that when a process of consultation brings together different actors to collectively build an agenda of priorities and policies, every group will naturally bring their own interests to the table and promote what is good for them, but not necessarily good for the whole. This is when the process often reaches an impasse, and when good leadership is needed to help take it to a next stage and find common ground. The role of the leader in this situation is crucial to help adjust the various perspectives and help the collective interest emerge.

the need for "a new charter to guide state behavior in the transition to sustainable development" ... it was envisioned that the charter should "prescribe new norms for state and interstate behaviour needed to maintain livelihoods and life on our shared planet". (The World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). P. 332). This process eventually led to the Earth Summit as a way to set up a new world agenda for the 21st century.



MFS at the Earth Charter 1st International Workshop, the Hague, May 1995

Additionally, as time passes many leaders may drop a vision they had embraced, either because they embrace a new one – a newer initiative – or because its achievement is too hard to reach. Others, like Mr. Strong, persist over time with a vision, without allowing it to feel either obsolete or impossible to achieve. Often in his speeches and interactions, he referred to the need for humanity to both make strong decisions to change the course of the future and also to examine the values that underline our decisions. He used to say: "...at the deepest level, our motivations are rooted in our moral, ethical and spiritual being."

In 2005, in a memorable speech at the five-year launch of the Earth Charter, when his health was very frail, he briefly encapsulated the complex factors that have led to environmental degradation and profound social and economic injustice. He said, "We cannot afford to allow materialism and self-interest to ride rough shod over community values and societies. But neither can we make these profound changes alone, we need to work together...We are victims of 'the struggle between ecosystems and egosystems'. It is the egos of people, governments, businesses that prevent solutions and generate a terrible lack of political will." (Earth Charter International. 2005. Earth Charter+5 Report)



In the 90s, I had the opportunity to be with him at international conferences and witness the demands on his time; I then asked him how he handled that pressure. He replied: "I know how to take moments of silence and rest every day to keep me going." He frequently showed me the importance of nurturing our inner peace in order to be able to go through the challenges and stressors of life.

Mr. Strong was a master in the art of building collaboration across sectors and nations, because of both his dedication to practicing it and his passion for it. Let us hope that the current and next generations will be inspired by leaders like him, who are not afraid to envision an alternative and better future for all, or of taking on the responsibility to move that vision forward. The world truly needs to count on such sensitive and passionate leaders like him, who are committed in forging a shared vision of the common good and global values.

## **Bibliography**

Earth Charter International. (2005). *Earth Charter+5 Report*

Earth Charter Commission. (2000). *The Earth Charter*

Earth Charter International. (2000). *The Earth Charter* launch, 29 June 2000. Maurice Strong speech United Nations General Assembly (1992). *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development*. Maurice Strong opening speech at the Earth Summit on 3 June 1992 A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. IV)

The World Commission on Environment and Development. (1987). *Our Common Future* Report, Oxford University Press.

# A 50+ History of Contacts

Wolfensohn, James D.\*

Maurice Strong was my friend for more than 50 years. We enjoyed so much the many contacts we had over that period, during which each of us was occupied by a series of different roles.

It all started in the late 60s in Australia, where Maurice had decided that Power Corporation could invest significantly in projects that were quite unique to Australia. The first of these was primary production in agriculture. I became chairman of Power Corporation Australia. Though I was drawing on the limited knowledge I had from my youth, this did not stop us from looking for projects and subsequently investing in two of them.

The first was a more than 2,000,000-acre property in the northwest of Australia and the second was a 5,000-acre property near Sydney. The second property was for raising cattle. It was relatively normal and was held by the Corporation for a series of years. The main challenge was our very large property: we ran into a series of obstacles that neither one of us had seen before. This started with the huge size of the project and the limited number of people that one could find to manage the enterprise. We had very few Europeans at the top, who all wore pistols in their belts. This was a mark of their authority over the aborigines, who did not have the same weapons, and were also in the habit of leaving the property for weeks or even months at a time without advance notice to the management. Very bad behavior could be dealt with by placing the offender in a car or on a roof during a summer day, and that could, in the extreme, lead to a horrifying death. Fortunately, on this occasion, the extreme penalties were not necessary. The partnership between the management and the aboriginal staff continued to build.

---

\* James Wolfensohn is Chairman, Wolfensohn & Company. Former President, World Bank (1995-2005)

Managing the property was also very difficult, with hundred square-mile paddocks and camels from an earlier time, and especially challenging when unattractive alligators frequented the shoreline and inside areas where there was fresh water. This was a tough place to operate and, unfortunately, I had to leave it to pursue other activities. Maurice remained intrigued and interested in the primary production area, but sadly I could not be his partner at that time. However, he had a great team assembled, including a future Prime Minister of Canada, Paul Martin, a young man that was already showing his very unusual capacities.

Maurice went on to become the leader of the movement to establish the United Nations as the center of development for a better world with regard to the environment, and did so at a time when there was no similar organization existing or planned. During the late 60s and early 70s, Maurice put together a group of political, business and academic world leaders to discuss how the challenge of the changing environment could be met. One such leader was Barbara Ward, the distinguished academic who convened a series of small meetings with a group that showed a great interest in this new evolving subject. It was no surprise that she and René Dubos were asked by Maurice to prepare a report, *Only One Earth: The Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet*, which formed the basis for discussion at the 1972 UN Conference.

In the decade prior to 1972, Maurice was very active in reaching out to people in the community who had an interest in the environment. He sought those who were prepared to devote time and effort to bring about international institutions that could undertake the task of educating leaders and challenge the nations of the world to understand the issue's importance. He provided resources to those who wished to contribute to establishing a better world. Not surprisingly, Maurice was asked to organize and lead both the 1972 United Nations Conference on Human Environment and the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, which for the first time focused the world on taking care of itself and on facing challenges that could undermine development or, in some cases, render it impossible. These two conferences and the permanent staff working on the subject allowed for great

progress to be made in subsequent years.

After a series of preliminary meetings, the Secretary-General, Kofi Annan, as Executive Coordinator of UN Reform, appointed Maurice Strong. Maurice Strong led a small team in the United Nations that worked diligently to prepare proposals for the General Assembly, proposals that recognized the unique quality of his new and separate program. Today, this work is the basis for guarding the world's environment in the decades to come. Of utmost interest, however, was the extent of Maurice's passion for working on these environmental commitments, as reflected in the range of activities, which he undertook. He bridged the leadership of important Canadian companies like Dome Petroleum, Caltex, the leadership of the YMCA, and the Canadian entity to bring about investment by private companies in the developing world. He continued to participate as an advisor through the Canadian government and international bodies that could take advantage of his vast experience.

The current Under-Secretary-General of UNEP, Achim Steiner, said on the day of Maurice's death the following, "Today the world mourns one of its greats. Maurice Strong was a visionary and a pioneer of global sustainable development." He went on to say that the Paris Climate Conference commenced with a decision by the 2014 UN General Assembly to "rise to their historic responsibility as custodians of the planet, to take decisions that will unite rich and poor, North, South, East and West, in a new global partnership to ensure our common future." Very sadly, the United States has withdrawn from this unique conference.

During his public work, I was able to retain a warm working relationship with Maurice, bringing together his experience in many diverse fields with the work of the World Bank. Between 1995 and 2005, we met relatively often to discuss the state of the world and in particular his newly adopted area of interest in Asia. He established an office in China and worked with Beijing University. He was always ready to give me his views on global issues and, as we drew closer again, forthcoming developments with the environment as well as the future of China were central to our discussions.

In the past decade, as my contacts with Maurice became less regular than before, I was always happy to get an occasional call or note just to say hello and to inquire as to how things were going, or alternatively to comment on some recent development to which he thought I could contribute. Later in his life, I became aware of his illness and offered as best I could my advice and help. Those last years revealed we had lost nothing in our friendship; that we remained close to each other, though our lives had kept us apart. I now realize how much I miss him and how big an influence he was on me and on my family. He was a truly great man and a pivotal leader of this last century.

# About ECPD

## ORIGINS AND MISSION

The European Center for Peace and Development (ECPD) founded in Belgrade, in 1983, as an independent, international postgraduate education and research institution, is a Regional European Centre of the University for Peace established by the United Nations.

The ECPD represents a unique institution in this part of the world, and has a special significance to countries of South-Eastern Europe.

The ECPD was founded by the University for Peace established by the United Nations with the main tasks and objectives "to organize and carry out postgraduate studies, research projects and dissemination of knowledge, which contribute to the promotion of peace, development and international cooperation". Following its mission defined in the Charter of the University for Peace established by UN and its own Statute, the ECPD "... brings together the intellectual potential from all parts of the world for the benefit of implementation of the programs of education and research projects devoted to the fulfilment of the ECPD aims and objectives".

For its significant contribution to the programme and objectives of the International Year of Peace, ECPD was awarded by UN Secretary-General in 1987 the PEACE MESSENGER AWARD.

## TASKS AND OBJECTIVES

Basic tasks and objectives of ECPD have been incorporated into its program structure, which features:

- (A) Studies leading to postgraduate degrees and specialist postgraduate training in the European Union law, International

business law, International Relations and Diplomacy, International MBA Studies in the field of strategic, financial, human resources, urban and ecological management and Health Management Studies within the international programme of Global School of Health.

- (B) Interdisciplinary research on sustainable development issues, regional development, multicultural, multi-confessional and inter-ethnic relations, eco-management and international relations;
- (C) Organizing international meetings, conferences, round tables, symposia, and workshops on topical issues from its programme;
- (D) Publishing conference proceedings, professional and scientific texts, research papers, case-studies, textbooks, etc.



The historic core and the present CBD, where the ECPD Headquarters is located

Legacy for the future and future generations

# Remembering Maurice F. Strong

Tributes and Reminiscences

