

October 15, 2001 -- Toronto

For immediate release

Study shows Canada less prepared for sustainable development than war

(Toronto October 15, 2001) The Canadian government needs a roadmap if it hopes to make a significant contribution towards global economic and environmental peace through sustainable development at the Rio + 10 Conference next year in South Africa. "So we are supplying it," said Anne Mitchell, Executive Director of the Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy (CIELAP) upon the release of [A 4-Step Sustainable Development Strategy](#).

The need for quick action and enhanced attention was emphasized by the Auditor General of Canada reporting last week that "of the 28 (Federal) departments we monitor, the majority did not report on all of their sustainable development commitments and therefore did not provide complete progress reports."

Ms. Mitchell observed "The 1992 Earth Summit in Rio saw Canada, and most other nations speaking about the hope of "harmony among human beings and between humanity and nature". Instead the events of the past 30 days see us focused on other things and the promise of the Earth Summit dissipating into thin air".

At Rio, Canada committed to preparing a national strategy for sustainable development. Efforts since that time have not resulted in a national strategy. To date, federal departments are required to write their own strategies with little direction from the government, and no attempt has been made to include the provinces in a strategy. There are also no plans for civil society or business to be included in a national strategy.

The opportunity represented by Rio +10 can be realized by Canada if the Federal Government "fast tracks" the four steps outlined in the CIELAP report. Working with all stakeholders in Canadian society - government, business, not-for-profit, Canada could:

- Identify the Sustainable Development Objective(s)
- Set the Goals/Targets and develop rules and tools to meet the objectives
- Measure and Evaluate
- Test for sustainability

The CIELAP report points out fundamental flaws with the federal approach to sustainable development. There is confusion across departments with how to use different terms and concepts associated with sustainability. This confusion is slowing any real progress.

Prior to last months terrorist attacks there was still little action or commitment to the Rio +10 process and sustainable development. A series of meetings in Ottawa in the early fall clearly indicated that the Federal Government even in a time of peace had not committed to the promise of Rio and the environmental and economic peace achievable through sustainable development.

Ms Mitchell concluded, "the clock is ticking down on the deadline to Rio + 10 (2002). Just as extraordinary resources can be found in time of crisis we ask that comparable attention be paid by Canada to its international commitments of realizing the peace dividend achievable by successful global sustainable development".

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The Canadian Institute for Environmental Law and Policy has for been commenting on and monitoring policy and regulatory changes related to the environment for 30 years.