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THE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE
1972 U. N. CONFERENCE ON THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

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Introduction

The basic purposes which are to be served by the convening of the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment are set out in general terms in General Assembly resolution 2398 (XXIII) particularly where it states the belief that it is "desirable to provide a framework for comprehensive consideration within the United Nations of the problems of human environment in order to focus the attention of Governments and public opinion on the importance and urgency of this question and also to identify those aspects of it that can only or best be solved through international cooperation and agreement." (underlines added)

The objective of this paper is to outline such a framework with respect to the main agenda items to be considered during the U.N. Conference. The general themes on which this framework is based are the assertions that:

1. Governments, either individually or collectively, are the only bodies with the authority to act or to authorize action to identify, relieve, or solve environmental problems.
2. Domestic practices can and do have profound present and potential, direct and indirect effect on other countries.
3. Policies relating to one set of environmental problems may significantly affect the nature of other environmental problems.
4. Even in areas where domestic environmental problems have no direct or indirect multinational effects, progress toward solution of these domestic problems can be achieved through international cooperation in information exchange and technical assistance.

The Focus of the U.N. Conference on Governmental Action

In addition to the proposed Declaration on the Human Environment, the U.N. Conference will consider six main subject areas:

1. THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
2. THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
3. IDENTIFICATION AND CONTROL OF POLLUTANTS AND NUISANCES OF BROAD INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE
4. EDUCATIONAL, INFORMATIONAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
5. DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT
6. THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION PROPOSALS

These subject areas include such diverse and seemingly unrelated topics as "trends in rural-urban migration", "forestry practices", and "man's impact on climate". Yet the relationship among these areas and topics is much more significant than a simple linkage through a very general term such as "human environment".

These areas are integrally related by the fact that the roots of all of the associated environmental problems--and thus the seeds of possible solutions--are located in the actions of numerous persons who act individually and collectively in developing and servicing their respective societies. In some cases environmental problems are caused by actions in the private sector and in other cases by the actions of governments.

Whether the harmful environmental impact of any given domestic practice or collection of domestic practices is at a local, national, regional, or global level, the steps necessary to reduce that impact through regulation or control must be taken by governments. Of course, for many problems several governments must act jointly or at least simultaneously for positive results, but the decisions required for actions must be made by or within nations.

This realization is not new--it has always been a fact of international life--but it is particularly profound with respect to environmental problems. When a purely domestic practice--even one which a government has not found it necessary or desirable to regulate--has a direct or easily determined indirect effect on the public interest of another nation, then this domestic practice is the cause of an international problem.

It is clear that if the problems of the human environment are to be handled effectively, Member states must be the responsive and responsible instruments for implementing or authorizing action. It will be made equally clear throughout this Conference that the framework within which decisions for action--or inaction--are made must be broader than that often implied by narrowly defined national interest.

Most significant to nations as they consider problems of the human environment is the simple fact that, in the final analysis, each government must deal with the sectors of its own country if international problems are to be solved. It was in recognition of this that the Secretary-General

of the United Nations stated in May 1969:

The principal specific raison d'être of the Conference would therefore be its concentration on the need for action by public authorities, at the local, national, regional, and international levels, to deal with the problems of planning, management and control of the human environment for economic and social developments.

Only such concentration of the Conference on governmental action appears to be able to provide a strong link and guiding thread in the diversity and multiplicity of problems which will necessarily come within its scope. (underlines added).

This statement provides the charter and the challenge for the Conference.

Action Frame for Governments

In November 1970, the Secretary-General of the U.N. Conference noted during his remarks to the Preparatory Committee for the Conference that: "A major implication [of the principal views of governments] is that the Conference must be process-oriented. This means that our role must be to organize and manage a process which will enable governments to reach decisions and take actions on the most pressing environmental issues" (underlines added). This section will outline the action frame for Governments which determines the focus, the outputs, and the organization of the Conference.

The General Characteristics of Environmental Problems

There are four general characteristics of environmental problems, each with its own implications for the type of actions required to ameliorate or solve the problem:

1. The domestic practices which cause the problem
2. The degree of deterioration of the component of the human environment
3. The state of knowledge of the nature, scope, and extent of the problem
4. The geographical extent of the impact of the problem

The Basic Action Statement of Governments

These characteristics lead directly to the formulation of a Basic Action Statement which all Governments will be encouraged to adopt at the 1972 U.N. Conference on the Human Environment:

EACH GOVERNMENT RESOLVES TO ACT TO DETERMINE THE CAUSES AND DEGREE OF DETERIORATION OF MAJOR LOCAL, REGIONAL, AND GLOBAL COMPONENTS OF THE HUMAN ENVIRONMENT AND TO TAKE APPROPRIATE ACTIONS TO MAINTAIN AND IMPROVE THOSE COMPONENTS.

Implementation of such an action statement will require the adoption of accelerated programs for assessment of environmental problems and the development of measures to remedy problems which have been or will be identified. These actions will require increased utilization of existing national and international mechanisms and the development of new ad hoc and formal modes of internal and multinational action.

General Framework for Operationalizing the Basic Action Statement

The framework to aid Governments in operationalizing the Basic Action Statement for specific types of problems will be provided in detail in the documentation for the Conference. The general framework, however, is presented here. This general framework involves the classification of

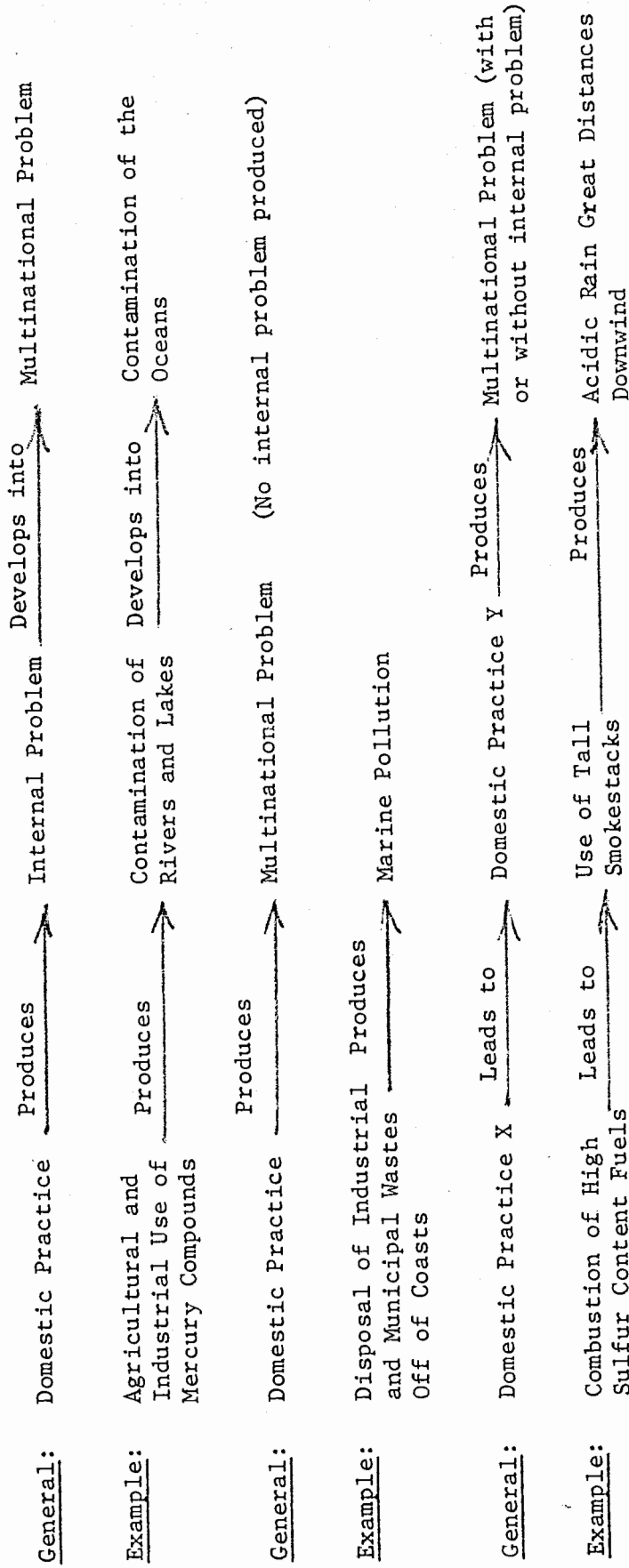
environmental problems with respect to subsets of the four general characteristics listed above.

The first general characteristic relates environmental problems to the domestic practices which cause them. Any specific domestic practice which is identified as having a harmful effect will require some specific form of action. In general, however, two types of classifications can be made and these are discussed in more detail in the section on the action frame of the Conference. The first classification is with respect to the realm of human activity to which the domestic practice belongs--either the management of human settlements or the management of natural resources. The second classification is with respect to the geographical area of environmental impact of a domestic practice--either internal to national boundaries or multinational. For examples of three ways in which domestic practices can have multinational effects, see Figure 1.

The second and third general characteristics of environmental problems relate to the degree of deterioration of a component of the environment and the state of knowledge of the nature, scope, and extent of the problem. There are an indeterminate number of states of these two characteristics in which an environmental problem might exist, but for purposes of a general framework there are three states which could be effectively used to classify almost every major environmental problem:

1. Suspect potential damage, but do not know the nature and scope
2. Experiencing some deterioration, but do not know the extent and/or causes
3. Experiencing deterioration, and do know extent and/or causes

FIGURE 1. WAYS IN WHICH DOMESTIC PRACTICES CAN HAVE MULTINATIONAL EFFECTS



Note: Problems may be present or potential, short-term or long-term, or may be the direct or indirect effect of the domestic practice

The fourth general characteristic of environmental problems relates to the geographical extent of their impact. For this characteristic, there are three basic categories--human settlement or local, territorial or regional, and global.

A matrix of the three categories of the third and fourth characteristics and the three categories of the fourth characteristic yields nine major classes of environmental problems (see Figure 2). Each major class has distinct implications for action.

Once environmental problems have been classified with respect to their causes and their degree of deterioration at the local, regional, or global level, there is a broad range of possible actions which can be taken.

The major types of action are listed below:

- Information Exchange
- Technology Transfer
- Technical Assistance
- Financial Assistance
- Data Collection
- Data Evaluation
- Research, Development, and Demonstration
- Establishing Criteria for Standards
- Setting Standards
- Regulation and Control of Domestic Practices
- Establishing New Mechanisms

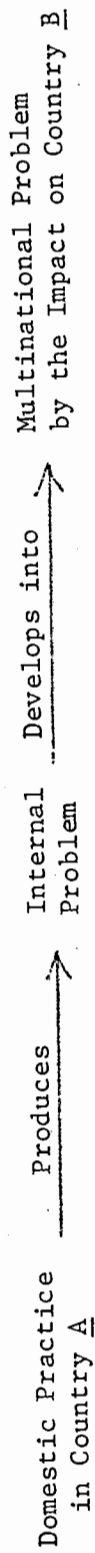
The substantive content of any action will depend, of course, on the specific causes and the exact nature of the problem; however, the types of action chosen from the above list will be largely determined by the general nature and the present status of understanding of the environmental impact of some practice. These actions can either be taken by nations internally or cooperatively with other nations, but in some areas multinational

FIGURE 2. MATRIX OF NINE MAJOR CLASSES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS

(An example of each class is given in parenthesis in each matrix element)

<p style="text-align: center;">GEOGRAPHICAL EXTENT OF IMPACT DEGREE OF DETERIORATION, STATE OF KNOWLEDGE</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Human Settlement or Local</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Territorial or Regional</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Global</p>
<p>Suspect Potential Damage: Do Not Know Nature and Scope</p>	<p>(Future Industrialization)</p>	<p>(Regional Lake or Sea)</p>	<p>(Climate Modification)</p>
<p>Experiencing Some Deterioration: Do Not Know Extent and/or Causes</p>	<p>(Physical and Mental Health)</p>	<p>(Movement of Polluted Air Masses)</p>	<p>(Chemical Pollution of the Oceans)</p>
<p>Experiencing Deterioration: Do Know Extent and/or Causes</p>	<p>(Municipal Waste Disposal)</p>	<p>(Polluted River Basin)</p>	<p>(Utilization of Persistent Pesticides)</p>

FIGURE 3. EXAMPLES OF TYPES OF ACTION INVOLVED IN SOLVING A MULTINATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEM



(Letters below refer to countries - A and B are countries noted above)

Multinational Cooperative Action:

A exchanges information with C, D, and E that have similar internal problems

A and B exchange information with F and G that have a similar regional problem

A and B agree to collect data on the causes and impacts of their multinational problem

A and B evaluate data with technical assistance from H

A and B establish criteria for standards

A and B share costs of research for means to meet possible new standards with technology transfer from I

Internal Action:

A sets standards for the domestic practice

A establishes new mechanisms to regulate and control the domestic practice

Multinational Cooperative Action:

A receives financial assistance from J to solve the internal problem

A and B establish new mechanisms to monitor (collect and evaluate data) on the effectiveness of A's controls to solve their multinational problem

action is the only effective means for positive results. For illustrative purposes, Figure 3 presents some examples of the types of actions which might be involved in solving a multinational environmental problem.

Figure 4 shows the primary types of action which might be expected for the nine major classes of environmental problems presented in Figure 2. These nine classes and related actions are treated in much more detail in the Conference documentation and specific examples of each class are provided in case studies prepared for the Conference.

Modes of Governmental Action

The Conference documentation developed within the general framework described above and the outputs of the Conference generated through the action frame of the Conference to be described below should provide Governments with the information to operationalize the Basic Action Statement. During or following the Conference, Governments must develop and adopt modes of action to meet the objectives of the Basic Action Statement. Specifically, Governments must:

1. Effectively utilize, present or establish new mechanisms-- ad hoc and/or formal, internal and/or multinational--to:
 - a. Determine which domestic practices create specific problems
 - b. Assess the degree of deterioration of major components of the human environment
2. Act, internally or multinationally, to institute measures to maintain and improve the environment in those areas where the nature, scope, and extent of specific problems have been determined.

FIGURE 4. PRIMARY TYPES OF ACTION FOR NINE MAJOR CLASSES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS
(For examples of each class, See Figure 2)

MAJOR TYPES OF ACTION CLASSES OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS	Information Exchange	Technology Transfer	Technical Assistance	Financial Assistance	Data Collection	Data Evaluation	Research Development & Demonstration	Establishing Criteria for Setting Standards	Setting Standards	Regulation and Control of Domestic Practices	Establishing New Mechanisms
I. Suspect Potential Damage: Do Not Know Nature and Scope											
A. Human Settlement or Local	C	C	C	C	I	I	I				I
B. Territorial or Regional	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C			I,C
C. Global	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C			I,C
II. Experiencing Some Deterioration: Do Not Know Extent and/or Causes											
A. Human Settlement or Local	C	C	C	C	I	I	I	I			I
B. Territorial or Regional	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C			I,C
C. Global	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C			I,C
III. Experiencing Deterioration: Do Know Extent and/or Causes											
A. Human Settlement or Local	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	I	I	I	I
B. Territorial or Regional	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	I	I,C
C. Global	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I,C	I	I,C

Note: I denotes Internal action
C denotes multinational Cooperative action

The basic principle in developing these modes should be the focus on particular environmental systems or problems of mutual or common interest to more than one nation because of geography or the ubiquity of the problem. These modes should allow affected states to act together on topics of direct concern in a manner consistent with the nature of the environmental problem rather than the ideologies or levels of economic development of the concerned states.

It should also be recognized that effective new modes of action can be developed which do not require a great financial investment or any major organizational changes. Where possible, temporary, ad hoc mechanisms should be established to allow immediate and sharp focus on specific problems of concern to more than one nation. If formal modes of action are adopted, flexibility must be assured so that they will provide continuing support for several decades to those interested in maintaining and enhancing environmental quality.

The Action Frame for the U.N. Conference

The Focus of the Conference

The U.N. Conference, in the words of the Conference Secretary-General, "is neither the beginning nor the end of our work in the environmental field, but a high point in a process of adaptation by the world community to a radically new set of conditions and responsibilities." To provide the insights and perspectives necessary in this process of adaptation, the action frame of the Conference focuses on:

1. The present or potential impact of domestic practices on the human environment and the implications of alteration or curtailment of these practices.
2. The ways in which cooperative multinational action can be effective in maintaining and improving the human environment.

The Outputs of the Conference

The outputs of the Conference and the Conference preparation process should provide Governments with the authoritative information and the specific examples they will require in implementing the Basic Action Statement. The Conference documentation seeks to answer the following questions for the major components of the human environment:

What can we now authoritatively say on the subject?

What are the gaps in knowledge which limit our confidence in the assessments we can now make?

What must be done to improve the data and our understanding of their significance so that better assessments may be made in the future?

What programs of research, monitoring, and action are needed?

What are the characteristics of the national and/or international actions needed to ameliorate or solve the environmental problem?

Specifically, the Conference documentation provides Governments with the following:

1. Classification of the degrees of deterioration of major components of the human environment including the identification of what to look for in each case and the methods and techniques for analyses.
2. Information showing how domestic practices create or exacerbate specific problems.
3. Identification of the problems of internal and/or multinational concern

4. Examples of measures and techniques used to confront specific environmental problems
5. Identification of countries that have major interest and/or involvement in specific problems

The Organization of the Conference

The Conference will consist primarily of the work of three Committees, each considering two of the main subject areas of the agenda listed below:

1. THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY
2. THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT
3. IDENTIFICATION AND CONTROL OF POLLUTANTS AND NUISANCES OF BROAD INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE
4. EDUCATIONAL, INFORMATIONAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES
5. DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT
6. THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF ACTION PROPOSALS

The first of these areas will be discussed during the first week and the second three during the second week. The general objectives of the first week's effort will be to define and assess the major problems in their respective areas of concern and to recommend measures for maintaining or improving environmental quality. During the second week, these analyses will be refined and many of the recommendations will be made operational through systematic consideration of the social, cultural, developmental, and international organizational aspects of the problem areas. A more detailed outline of objectives is given later in Table 1.

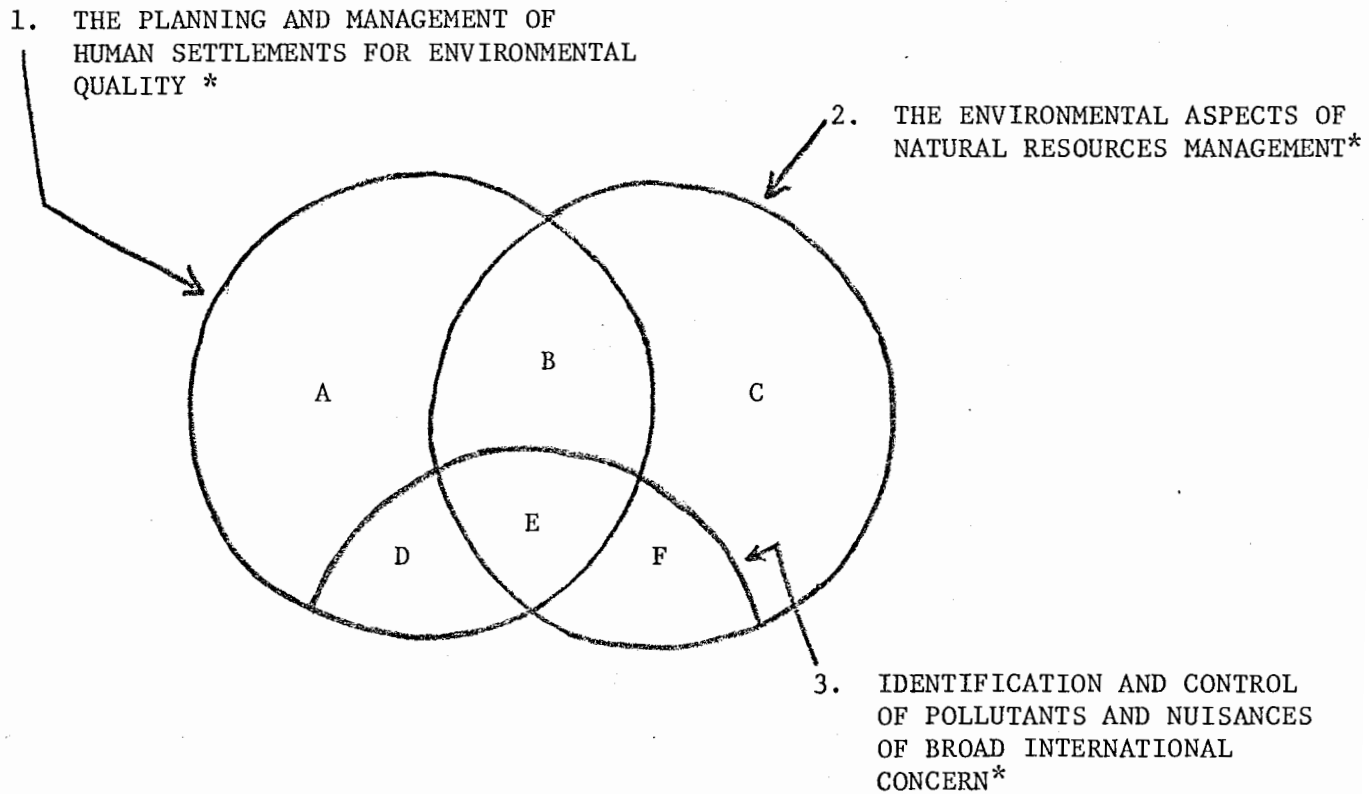
Subject Area 1, THE PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN SETTLEMENTS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY, and Area 2, THE ENVIRONMENTAL ASPECTS OF NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT, include virtually all domestic practices and policies which result in man's impact on the environment.* Some of these impacts are only felt internally within a country. However, many of these practices have direct or indirect effects on other nations and these practices are considered in Area 3, IDENTIFICATION AND CONTROL OF POLLUTANTS AND NUISANCES OF BROAD INTERNATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE.

Figure 5 shows the intersection of these three areas with respect to the environmental impact of domestic practices. The impacts of groups A, B, and C of the figure are felt only internally, while those of D, E, and F are multinational. Examples of specific problems in each group are given in the figure.

Very careful attention must be given to determining whether certain problems are in categories A or D, B or E, C or F. Sometimes a problem which seems to be completely internal may have an indirect effect on another country or if left unregulated might develop into an international problem. Even more subtle are the cases where certain domestic practices or policies create conditions that necessitate other practices that then give rise to international problems. Especially in these latter cases, sovereign states must be prepared to be responsive and cooperative if major environmental problems are to be effectively confronted. (Refer to Figure 1)

* As defined in the Report of the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the U.N. Conference, A/CONF. 48/ PC.9, 26 February 1971.

FIGURE 5. INTERSECTION OF TOPICS OF MAIN SUBJECT AREAS 1, 2, and 3
WITH RESPECT TO ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT OF DOMESTIC PRACTICES



Note: Environmental impacts of groups A, B, and C are internal to one country
Environmental impacts of groups D, E, and F are multinational (territorial or regional, or global)

Example of Topic in Each area: **

- A - Housing, Noise
- B - Rural development and agriculture
- C - Forestry, Strip Mining
- D - Health Effects
- E - Climate Effects
- F - Marine Pollution

* As defined in the Report of the Second Session of the Preparatory Committee for the U.N. Conference, A/CONF. 48/PC.9, 26 February 1971.

** Exact classification depends on the specific circumstances.

Such responsiveness can only be realistically expected if the problems and the associated implications are well understood. The three Committees of the Conference are charged with the responsibility of arriving at such understandings where possible and determining measures for achieving understanding where it is not presently possible.

Whether a problem is judged to have only internal domestic impact or to have multinational impact, all action for change, i.e. regulation or control must be made at national or sub-national levels because in every case domestic practices cause the problems. Thus it is essential that the Conference analyze all major domestic practices in the areas of human settlement and management of natural resources. For problems in groups D, E, and F of Figure 5, international cooperation is essential; but even for groups A, B, and C, international cooperation in the form of information exchange and/or technical assistance can greatly facilitate determining or implementing solutions.

The following three tables and one figure provide a general picture of the interrelatedness of the six main subject areas of the Conference agenda. Table 1 outlines some of the principal objectives of deliberation of these areas. Areas 1, 2, and 3 will be treated during the first week by Committees 1, 2, and 3, respectively. During the second week, Committees 1, 2, and 3 will consider areas 4, 5, and 6, respectively.

It is clear from the outline of objectives how the various groups depend on each other for information and analyses so that effective action proposals can be considered. Some of the major interactions are noted in

Table 2, and Figure 6 provides an illustrative example of the flow of information among groups. It should be noted that these interactions have been explicitly incorporated through the preparation of the Conference documents and that liaison between the Committees during the working sessions will assure that new insights or agreements are reflected in the deliberations of all Committees.

Table 3 presents a matrix of the primary types of action which each area will recommend. Since the potential actions are so heavily dependent on the nature of the problem, these areas have been further subdivided but even so the matrix is only illustrative. More detailed matrices are incorporated with the Conference papers for each area.

These tables show how the Conference agenda items have been organized and demonstrate the integrated nature of the conceptual framework of the Conference.

TABLE 1. PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES OF DELIBERATION OF MAIN SUBJECT AREAS

<u>MAIN SUBJECT AREAS</u>	<u>PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES</u>
1. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS	<p>1. To aid decision-making on internal domestic problems To compare and contrast the nature of problems and solutions in different countries and societies To identify domestic practices which have present or potential direct or indirect effects on other nations To determine appropriate internal actions for more effective management of settlement development</p>
2. NATURAL RESOURCES	<p>2. To aid decision-making on internal domestic problems To compare and contrast the nature of problems and solutions in different countries To identify domestic practices which have present or potential direct or indirect effects on other nations To determine appropriate internal and multinational actions for better management and utilization of resources</p>
3. INTERNATIONAL POLLUTANTS	<p>3. To identify multinational and global problems To identify causes of such problems from the practices identified in areas 1 and 2 To determine the cooperative measures required for maintaining and improving the quality of the environmental media</p>
4. EDUCATIONAL, INFORMATIONAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS	<p>4. To refine analyses in areas 1, 2, and 3 through introduction of new aspects To help make recommendations of areas 1, 2, and 3 more operational through systematic consideration of new aspects To recommend national and international mechanisms for education and information needs identified in areas 1, 2, and 3</p>
5. DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT	<p>5. To relate the information of areas 1, 2, and 3 directly to the needs and perspectives of developing states To identify how developing states can avoid problems which developed states now face To determine the potential impacts of actions proposed in areas 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. To recommend international mechanisms particularly suited for aiding developing countries in preventing and confronting environmental problems.</p>
6. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS	<p>6. To recommend international mechanisms required to meet the needs identified in areas 1, 2, and 3.</p>

FIGURE 6. ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLE OF FLOW OF INFORMATION AMONG GROUPS

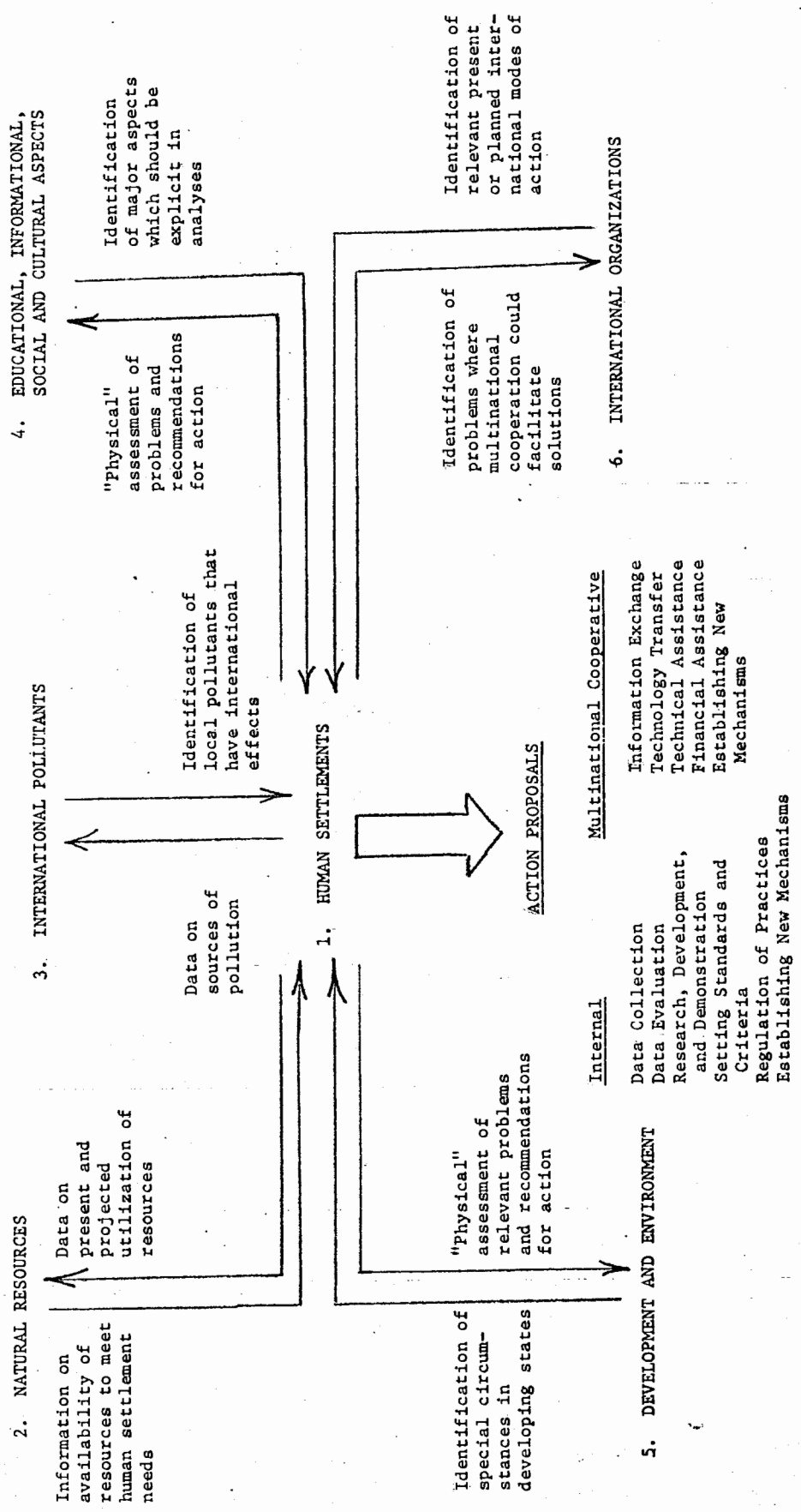


TABLE 3. PRIMARY TYPES OF ACTION FOR EACH MAIN SUBJECT AREA

TYPES OF ACTIONS MAIN SUBJECT AREAS	Information Exchange	Technology Transfer	Technology Assistance	Financial Assistance	Data Collection	Data Evaluation	Research Development & Demonstration	Establishing Criteria for Setting Standards	Setting Standards	Regulation and Control of Domestic Practices	Establishing New Mechanisms
1. HUMAN SETTLEMENTS											
Internal Impacts	C	C	C	C	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Multinational Impacts	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	I	I,C
2. NATURAL RESOURCES											
Internal Impacts	C	C	C	C	I	I	I	I	I	I	I
Multinational Impacts	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	I,C
3. INTERNATIONAL POLLUTANTS											
	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	I,C
4. EDUCATIONAL, INFORMATIONAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ASPECTS											
Internal Needs	C	C	C	C	C	I	C				I,C
Multinational Needs	C	C	C	C	C	C	C				C
5. DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENT											
	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	I	I,C
6. INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS											
	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	C	I	C

Note: I denotes Internal action
C denotes multinational Cooperative action

The conceptual framework for the 1972 U.N. Conference is fundamentally based on the assertion that Governments, either individually or collectively, are the only bodies with the authority to act or to authorize action to identify, relieve, or solve environmental problems. This concentration on governmental action provides, in the words of the Secretary-General of the U.N., "a strong link and guiding thread in the diversity and multiplicity of problems which will necessarily come within its [the Conference] scope."

Since the prepared inputs, organization, and projected outputs of the Conference should combine to help enable governments reach decisions and take actions, it is important to develop plans for the Conference within an action frame for Governments. The action frame presented here is centered around a Basic Action Statement which each nation will be encouraged to adopt. The framework for operationalizing this Statement consists of nine major classes of environmental problems and eleven types of actions which can be taken. The Conference documentation will present basic position papers, action papers, and case studies consistent with this action frame for Governments.

The action frame for the Conference has been developed to provide the information which Governments require in a form which will be most useful for comprehensive consideration of the problems and for identification of areas of potential international cooperation and agreement. The foundation of the Conference action frame is the focus on six main subject areas. This conceptual framework outlines the principal objectives of each subject area and demonstrates how the different areas are interrelated to provide a comprehensive view of major environmental problems and a basis for action by Governments, either internally or in close cooperation with each other.