

# Worldwatch Report Calls 1990's Decisive Decade for Environment

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Jan. 11 — Two years ago, the Washington-based Worldwatch Institute warned that the world had about 40 years in which to reverse environmental deterioration or face a long decline into economic and social ruin.

But in its latest annual report, the institute asserts that the 1990's are the "decisive decade" for environmental change, declaring that nothing short of an "environmental revolution" will save the planet.

This revolution will require radical changes, from a reduced reliance on fossil fuels to redistribution of resources and a rapid shift to smaller families, the report says.

Lester R. Brown, president of the institute and director of the study, said that the world had "not succeeded in turning around a single major trend in environmental degradation" since environmental issues came to global prominence at the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm.

The report lists several warning signs of potential environmental disaster, including continuing evidence of global warming, excessive population growth and deforestation.

Environmental degradation has affected global food production, the report says, citing statistics indicating that temperature changes, soil erosion and air pollution have reduced crop yields by about 1 percent annually since 1984.

"We've underestimated what it will take" to reverse these trends, Mr. Brown said. "Stabilizing the climate depends on restructuring the world economy to phase out fossil fuels. Stabilizing the population will require a revolution in human reproductive be-

havior."

The report emphasizes the "pivotal role" of governments and corporations in stopping environmental degradation, and points to some positive signs that people are responding to the crisis: the European Community's proposal to replace some of its existing taxes with an energy consumption tax; Germany's pledge to reduce carbon emissions by 25 percent by 2005; the

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## To save the planet, a 'revolution' is proposed.

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reduction of soil erosion on American croplands by a third in the last five years, and Denmark's ban on throw-away beverage containers.

But these steps are "all too few," Mr. Brown said, adding that it may take a nuclear accident, catastrophic climate change or a food crisis to rally global support for drastic measures.

If the world does not respond to environmental degradation, he said, it will lead to economic distress that is politically unmanageable. He said a look at many archeological sites provided hints of what might come.

"North Africa was once the granary of the Roman Empire," Mr. Brown said. "Now it's largely desert."

Copies of the report may be obtained for \$10.95 from the Worldwatch Institute, 1776 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20032.