

Brandt Commission

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Description On 28 September 1977, former West German Chancellor and Nobel Laureate Willy Brandt announced that he had agreed to lead a Commission on International Development Issues. Brandt had embraced World Bank President Robert McNamara's suggestion that an autonomous Commission aimed at improving the climate of North-South negotiations was needed.

The Commission adopted terms of reference that would guide its work, and set out to produce a representative and authoritative account of the conditions brought on by socio-economic disparities between countries. Its work would also detail the path towards a more equitable liberal international order. Financed largely by the Dutch and other European government sources, a Secretariat was established and a Commission was struck, consisting of mainly former politicians and international officials from Western countries and the South. In seeking to influence public opinion and improve intergovernmental cooperation for development, the Brandt Commission stressed that both North and South had a mutual interest in freeing the world economy from the scourges of "dependence and oppression...hunger and distress" (Independent Commission on International Development Issues 1980: 29).

In 1980 the Commission released its report, *North-South: A Programme for Survival*. Selling nearly one million copies, the report presented the shared-interests thesis and articulated policy options. It made recommendations to transcend problems associated with the operations of transnational corporations, food and agricultural production and distribution, declining terms of trade for primary commodity exporters, Northern protectionism, high energy prices, population growth and movements, the international financial and monetary system, unsustainable foreign debt loads, low levels of development assistance, and the high costs of the arms race. The Report's central pillar was an emergency program to end poverty in the Least Developed Countries that would require an additional \$4 billion in aid flows per year over twenty years. To meet this goal developed nations were challenged to make foreign aid equivalent to 1 percent of their GDP by the year 2000. The North-South report also called for a new international division of labour to redistribute productive resources and incomes to the Global South. As well, the report advocated the creation of a comprehensive international trade organization that would incorporate development concerns.

Efforts to implement the Commission's recommendations and reframe

North-South negotiations at the 1981 Cancun Summit on International Development were derailed by US President Ronald Reagan's rejection of the process and his administration's subsequent policy stances. Nevertheless, the popular Commission continued its work, producing a second report in 1983. However, through the 1980s and 1990s governments in the North failed to reach the aid target or implement open trade policies. In 2005 the Commission for Africa led by British Prime Minister Tony Blair sought to further Brandt's vision by reasserting the view that world leaders have a mutual interest in African development and updating Brandt's policy prescriptions.

- Suggested Reading: **Independent Commission on International Development Issues.** 1980. *North-South: A programme for survival*. London: Pan Books.
- Independent Commission on International Development Issues.** 1983. *Common crisis North-South: Cooperation for world recovery*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Quilligan, James Bernard.** 2002. *The Brandt equation: 21st century blueprint for the new global economy*. (accessed 15 August 2005)