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EUROPEAN COMMUNITY INFORMATION SERVICE

2100 M Street Northwest, Suite 707, Washington D.C. 20037 • Telephone: (202) 296-5131
New York Office: 155 E. 44th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017 • Telephone: (212) MU 2-0458

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COMMON MARKET HEAD OPPOSES "UNBRIDLED GROWTH" OF RICH COUNTRIES

WASHINGTON, D.C., June 8 -- European Commission President Sicco L. Mansholt today challenged the notion that continued economic growth automatically means greater investment in social services. He attacked "unbridled growth of production and consumption" in the developed countries.

Addressing the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Mr. Mansholt cited figures from the European Community's first medium-term economic policy program to show that an increase in gross national product (GNP) does not necessarily expand the funds available for public facilities. The Community's objective for the 1965-70 period was for investment in public facilities to increase twice as fast as the GNP; in fact, although the GNP increased by five per cent, public investment only went up by the same fraction instead of the intended 10 per cent.

Mr. Mansholt warned the conference delegates against the danger of only tackling the symptoms of the current environmental problems and not the causes. It is no use, he said, trying to fight pollution of the seas, the soil, and the air and trying to restore the unstable ecological balance, unless, at the same time, steps are taken to combat:

- the unbridled growth of production and consumption in the rich countries, and
- the unlimited poverty and misery in the poor countries.

Hard Political Choices are Imperative

The President of the Commission asked the delegates attending the conference not to be lured into repeating all the usual technical and scientific discussions but to draw the necessary political conclusions. For this, he said, imagination and courage are needed to pursue new objectives which are completely at variance with the manifest wishes of today's citizen, for these objectives would restrict his freedom of consumption and production and would make him realize that his present prosperity is in part false.

For 20 years now, Mr. Mansholt continued, the nations of the world have been busy with this problem, but the gap between rich and poor in the world has become even wider.

"Are we," Mr. Mansholt asked, "as governments, as representatives of parliaments and political parties, prepared to do all that is necessary to make the earth livable? UNCTAD III had taught us how far we still are from this objective. Today in Stockholm we are moving on the same plane as in Santiago last month. In the rich countries, it is the unparalleled growth of our producer society which has us by the throat through the pollution it brings. In the poor countries it is poverty which reduces millions and millions to conditions that bear no relation to an existence worthy of human beings."

In conclusion, Mr. Mansholt emphasized the need for a global policy to preserve the environment. Air, water, and the ecological balance are not the property of nations but are the common heritage of man, he said.

"Is it not obvious," the President of the Commission asked, "that an organization should be set up to take decisions at a higher level than that of states?"

Mr. Mansholt proposed that a group of experts and politicians be commissioned to examine in what spheres of human activity a supranational institution could take appropriate action. "If such action can be taken anywhere, it can be taken in the sphere of protecting the environment," he added.