



Dalhousie University

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I.O.I. - Malta

**Statement**

*ICOD Hearings*

*June 3, 1992.*

*Elisabeth Mann Borgese*

*I am sorry that my responsibilities at the Rio Conference prevent me from being with you in Ottawa today. I regard these hearings as a very positive event and would like to use this occasion, albeit in absentia, to put my thoughts on record.*

*In all frankness, I consider the sudden abolition of ICOD as very unfortunate, with negative implications of various kinds.*

*ICOD was founded on the awareness of*

- . the fundamental importance of the oceans in our global life-support system;*
- . the new opportunities arising from the Law of the Sea Convention for developing countries to add a "new dimension" to development strategy, and, therefore, the particular importance and fruitfulness of development cooperation in the marine sector;*
- . the basic fact, that, as stated in the Preamble to the Law of the Sea Convention, the problems of the ocean are closely interrelated and need to be considered as a whole;*
- . the crucial importance of ocean development and wise management for the UNCED process, before and after Rio.*

*Over the past five years, ICOD had begun to translate these principles into a consistent programme of action. Projects and programmes were conceived so as to reinforce one another, to reduce costs and increase impact. The whole was to be bigger than the sum of the parts.*

*It appears inevitable to me even under the most optimistic assumption: i.e. that all projects will be taken over and administered by somebody, this integrity of the programme as a whole will be destroyed. There will be duplication, there will be gaps; costs will be higher, savings illusory, and impact will be frittered away.*



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*Canada could, and did, take pride in the fact that it was the first, and thus far, only, country that had a governmental agency solely devoted to ocean development and the conservation of the ocean environment. This strengthened Canada's credibility and influence in many countries, in regions where Canada's presence was less strong otherwise: In the South Pacific; the Indian Ocean; West Africa; the Caribbean; it also raised Canada's standing in international fora such as UNDP, the World Bank, UNEP, UNCED, the regional development banks, the European Community, etc. Cooperation with these institutions, as well as with bilateral funding agencies could have had a multiplier effect for Canadian initiatives in the environment/development context.*

*That all this should have been cut short just at this moment: that we should have to announce the demise of ICOD in RIO is indeed most unfortunate. Instead of arriving in Rio with a show-case, we will have to appear defensive: to try to explain something that will be difficult to understand for the international community.*

*We have lost credibility: with individual developing country partners as well as with international institutions. If this were the price to be paid for a real benefit domestically, it still might be worth paying. But the domestic benefits are illusory: There will be no savings; the dissolution of ICOD and the piecemeal dispersion of its programmes will be quite costly. The bottom line is big Minus.*

*Is there anything that can be done to remedy the situation?*

*Some doubts have been expressed by legal experts about the legality of the act of dissolution, without an act of Parliament. Perhaps one could keep final dissolution in abeyance, at least until, following the Rio conference, the UNCED process will be more clearly defined. Perhaps, in the UNCED context, and with the assurances the Prime Minister has recently given with regard to effective Canadian participation in this process, ICOD might be somehow reconstituted. The oceans are crucial to this process. Canadian expertise in the marine sector is world-class. It would be most effective to utilize this "comparative advantage" and make the Canadian contribution to the UNCED process primarily in this sector. A reconstituted ICOD could do this most effectively.*

*Elizabeth Nam Berger*