

22576

VOL. 11 - DOC. 58

WORLD COMMISSION ON ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT

THIRD MEETING
Oslo, 21-28 June 1985

WCED/85/20 Part 2

Item 8 of the Provisional Agenda

FORMAT OF THE FINAL REPORT

Format of the Final Report
Note by the Director of Information

Introduction

1. The information strategy discussed at Jakarta introduced the concept of tailoring the presentation of the Commission's final report to target readerships. It was recognized that the general readership will fall into two groups; those who have to read the report because it is part of their jobs, and those who do not need to read the report but whom the Commission would like to reach both to increase their awareness and if possible to bring them on board as allies in the promotion of support for the Commission's recommendations.
2. If the Commission is to achieve its objectives, the question of the format of its final report, or reports, becomes critical and general direction on it is required at the Oslo meeting.
3. The traditional report exists in a number of variants listed in the Information Strategy. In all of them the primary consideration is that the members of a commission, working group or committee concerned should agree that a certain form of words represents fairly what they said or concluded. Ancillary to this form is evidence heard, texts taken into account and background material. The report is really written, as it were, in order to satisfy those who have written it. Its prime purpose is to represent their views exactly. Readability is a secondary objective. The resulting texts resemble legal documents and are read by those who need to know accurately what position was taken by the members in subsequent ongoing activity.
4. The recent Commissions of Brandt, Palme and Maitland (on telecommunications development) have followed the traditional pattern although attempts were made to break out from the mould in the first two.
5. The merits of following precedent are:
 - a) there is no risk of arousing adverse reaction in the UN and in delegations to the UN because of an unusual format.

- b) the conventional format signals that the report is part of the central tradition.
 - c) no ambiguities arise because only one version of the report addresses all readerships.
6. The demerits are:
- a) that the report may arouse no one at all and will cause no ripples in the ebbing tide of support for multilateral environment and development initiatives.
 - b) that in targetting the one priority readership (that of governments) it will "turn off" a broader readership who represent a principal target audience of this Commission and whose support may be crucial to the overall purposes of the Commission.

Early Choice of Options

7. The choice that the Commission must make is whether to prepare and issue its report:
- a) in one form only aimed at all readerships; or
 - b) in two forms - i) an "official" report aimed at those who need to read the report as a professional duty; and ii) a second more "popular" version of the official report aimed at those who do not necessarily have to pay attention to the recommendations of the Commission.

The second option involving two reports is referred to as the TWIN-TRACK option.

8. The reason for asking the Commission to make the choice so early lies in practical requirements arising from the twin-track option.
9. In considering these options, the Commission may wish to recall some recent experience which involved the production of conventional reports with a text in the form of a pocket book available through the commercial book trade. This also involved the use of name authors to improve the readability and saleability of the product.

10. One may say that the measures so taken constitute a precedent for further innovations in the presentation of the World Commission's report.
11. If the twin-track approach is chosen involving, as it will, a popular version of the report, another element in the public information strategy takes on a special relevance. The Commission decided to seek popular TV presentations of its work and progress has been made in this regard. Moreover, the TV programmes will mark the publication of the final report and will, to all intents and purposes, function as a kind of TV commercial for the report. The two efforts at popularization (one TV, one printed) thus reinforce each other transmitting the Commission's views in both audio-visual and written forms. It is advisable therefore, that the Commission's printed report should exist in a form appropriate to a popular readership.

The Twin-Track Option

12. In order to explore the implications of the twin-track option, it is useful to begin by spelling out in more detail the potential readerships of the two reports.
13. The readership for the "official" report (here after referred to as the Final Report Official - FR(O)) would consist primarily of the people who need to know. A list would include interalia: all policy level staff in government departments of environment; senior policy makers in other ministeries such as finance, trade, energy, industry, agriculture, education; politicians in general; leaders of institutes and other bodies engaged in research into policies which have an environmental dimension; staff of scientific and technical institutes engaged in environmental research; the interested academic community; specialized correspondents and journalists; members of non-governmental organizations engaged in environment and development; members of the industrial and business communities responsible for environmental affairs; directly concerned officials in UN system of organizations and other intergovernmental bodies.

14. The readership for the more popular report (hereafter referred to as Final Report Popular - FR(P)) consists of people who do not need to read the Commission's work because of their professional occupation but might be induced to read the report and thus both increase their awareness of the issues and become valuable allies in creating support for the Commission's recommendations. It is usually called simply the general audience but would include specifically and in no particular order of priority the following: government officials outside environment and development specializations; ditto politicians at national and local level; UN and other intergovernmental officials; teachers; academics; students, both in humanities and science; popular journalists and media people; extension workers in the field; libraries; book clubs; industrial and business management and cadre; NGO camp followers; children at school.
15. A tertiary level of readership - a subset of those above - consists of (a) readers of newspapers and magazines who might be induced, because of attractive free artwork, to carry advanced serialization of the popular version; (b) primary and secondary school children whose schools, while not buying a version of the report, may take wall charts and teaching material produced under licence; (c) purchasers of newspaper books; (d) children who read children's magazines which can reproduce artwork or other appropriate graphical material arising from the report.
16. These target audiences imply a difference of approach. The first approach embodied in the FR(O) concept requires clarity and logic with a minimum of rhetoric, diversion or anecdote in the principal text. Case studies and reference material should be in précis form and placed in annexes. Summary and principle recommendations should come first followed by the amplification of supporting argumentation.
17. The second audience needs to be wooed by the most modern presentation techniques and does not necessarily take its information in the most logical fashion. The FR(P) would, of course, have a logic but it is the same logic by which television producers and actors hold the attention of an easily distracted audience - it has more to do with the world of entertainment than that of science, or the

logic of cause and effect. Thus, there would not necessarily be an exact correspondence in order of presentation of material between an official report with governments most in mind and a popularized report with the general audience in mind.

18. For the tertiary level of readership yet another stage of digestion and re-presentation is applied by newspaper editors, publishers etc. and this renders these approaches essentially beyond the influence of the Commission.
19. It should be noted that the nomenclature "official" and "popular" do not imply that an FR(O) would be necessarily unpopular nor that the FR(P) would be unofficial.
20. Their characteristics could be explained very simply through an appropriate introduction.

The first report, FR(O), might be introduced as one "...written for decision makers and their close advisors in governments; political parties; international organizations; at the executive level in the business, financial and non-governmental organization communities and the media. Its first part consists of recommendations for action and decision with the appropriate background considerations. The second part of the report consists of condensed background papers and other submissions both oral and written made to the World Commission and its Advisory Panels during the two years of preparatory work."

21. The second report, the FR(P), might be introduced as a book that "...has grown out of the need to communicate the work of the World Commission on Environment and Development to a wide readership. Priority has been given to the presentation of the broad issues in as vivid a way as possible and this has entailed some sacrifice of detail, nuance and the introduction of some extra background. It has also sometimes involved radical simplification. Text from the official report, quotations from WCED's working documents and all the final recommendations are clearly identified. Translations from the English language original are unofficial."

Popular Version FR(P)

22. It should be noted that a popular version would not be split into summary, main text, and annexes. It would be a homogeneous book with a bibliography and might well contain an order form to facilitate the subsequent purchase of the official version.
23. Most readers of this note will have seen copies of GAIA which is a good example of the kind of approach the FR(P) could take. Another example available for inspection is "Jungles". Yet another version of the book packagers' art is "The Timetable of Technology". They have several features that tend to jolt readers more familiar with the conventional book. They are designed to be opened in the middle or even the end. They can be read backwards. They can communicate even to people who do not like reading. The grasshopper mind is not despised but actually pandered to by numbers of boxes and small gatherings of facts and figures.
24. Each double page spread is in some sense an ideogram of which a dictionary definition is: "a written or printed character that symbolizes the idea of a thing without indicating the sounds that make up the word" (or message). This is the feature that could make the FR(P) a transcender of language barriers at least to a fair extent. Because text is short and subordinate to pictures and graphics, versions in different languages are easy to arrange. It is taken as axiomatic that the Commission would wish its work to be accessible in languages other than English.
25. It would be sold commercially. The contract with the packager/publisher would reflect, to the extent possible, various desires the Commission might wish to express e.g. a reduction in unit price in Third World markets after break even point; a government subsidized reprinting for schools at the national level; free availability of sections of artwork to educational publishers for wall charts etc; an augmented advertizing campaign to raise total sale on reprinting etc.
26. The price of such books is often in the range of \$17 to \$30. The actual cost price (not sale price) of the GAIA copies circulated to Commissioners was \$7.

Nevertheless, these are not prices that poor though literate people can afford especially in the Third World. There are solutions to this problem which involve the creation of cheaper versions of the FR(P) in addition to the measures mentioned in Para 25.

27. A separate "outreach" project would be needed to create and disseminate cheaper versions of the FR(P). These might involve two colour graphics or just black and white printing on cheaper non-coated papers. These "economy versions" would be quite distinct from the language versions which would be produced as a normal concomitant of the co-production deals necessary to launch book-packaged operations in the first place.
28. Language versions of internationally marketed book-packaged operations are typically Japanese, Spanish, French, German, Dutch, Italian, and Swedish. Separate outreach efforts would be required for Russian, Chinese, Hindu, Indonesian, Portuguese which lie beyond the ambit of the usual commercial arrangements.
29. Recapitulating then, it is requested that Commissioners consider and make a recommendation on the twin-track proposal in order to accommodate the longer lead time necessary for the preparatory work on a popular version of the Final Report. There will be further opportunities to discuss possible advanced formats for the FR(O) but there is no present urgency on this issue.