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By C. GERALD FRASER
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UNITED NATIONS — From June 3 to 14, representatives of 160 nations will meet in Rio de Janeiro at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the Earth Summit.

The meeting's objective: to agree on ways to correct the mishandling of the world's environment—the land, water and air as well as the natural resources.

"The Rio conference represents," said Jamsheed Marker, "an ongoing process, which will initiate and then perpetuate sustainable development, thus eliminating poverty and ensuring pru-

dent, continued and equitable distribution of the earth's resources."

Marker, Pakistan's U.N. ambassador, chairs the Group of 77, the Third World members of the U.N.

The conference signals acknowledgement by all nations that environment and development are linked. If, for example, women who live on the fringes of the Sahara cut down trees for firewood, the number of trees declines and the desert expands.

Worldwide poverty is increasing; the environment is being destroyed, and to survive, the world's rich and poor nations are being forced to cooperate.

U.N. officials hope the conference produces a Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, a statement of basic principles governing the economic and environmental behavior of nations.

As diplomats and heads of state meet, an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 people from hundreds of nongovernmental organizations concerned with environment and development from all over the world will also convene in Rio. Their objective: push the governments to take appropriate actions.

UNCED (pronounced un-said) has been planned for two years. The idea for the Rio conference grew out of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment held, in Stockholm 20 years ago.

In addition to the Rio Declaration, UNCED must produce some form of "blueprint for action in all major areas affecting the relationship between the environment and the economy." This things-to-do list is a 750-800 page document, "Agenda 21."

The conference must agree also on how to pay for implementing the agenda. Developing countries need financial resources and technologies in order to achieve environmentally sound development.

Two treaties, or conventions, may be signed at the conference. One, on climate change, deals with the problem of reducing carbon dioxide emissions and fossil fuel (coal and oil, for example) consumption. The key issue is whether the nations will include binding targets and a timetable for reduction of emissions. A timetable is viewed as an indication of determination.

The other proposed treaty deals with biodiversity — the millions of large and microscopic plants and animals on land, in the sea and in the air. Overharvesting, pollution and destruction of places where various species live have depleted the numbers of species in existence. These species play known and unknown roles in the

world's ecosystem — the species plus the land, water and air.

Some interested persons go so far as to say that if people keep messing with the ecosystem, humans may disappear from the earth, which will have to regenerate itself before human life, as we understand it, can reappear.

The biodiversity issue includes, for example, the harvesting by major pharmaceutical corporations of plants in tropical forests. The corporations take the plants out of developing countries and create high-priced medicines.

Generally, neither the indigenous peoples who often discovered the plants' curative powers nor the developing nations where the plants grow have been properly compensated.