

Gorbachev Sees Global Failure to Address Eco Risks

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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GENEVA — Former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev painted a dim picture of the world's environmental progress on Thursday, two decades after he and a former Swiss lawmaker founded Green Cross International.

Shortly before the Soviet Union's demise in 1991, then-leader Gorbachev proposed a Red Cross for the environment that could also tackle threats from a nuclear arms race and the over-consumption of the world's resources to runaway population and development pressures.

Reflecting on the 20 years since he and Roland Wiederkehr launched the Geneva-based organization, the 82-year-old Gorbachev admits to deep frustrations as an environmental crusader.

"All that has been done is too late, and it's not enough," Gorbachev, speaking in Russian, told

reporters in Geneva by video link.

Gorbachev railed against governments for falling short on nuclear disarmament, broader security, waste, development and climate change.

He urged governments to use his policies of "perestroika" and "glasnost" — which ushered in democratic changes that led against his will to the collapse of the Soviet Union — to address climate change and overconsumption of resources.

Gorbachev said world leaders had largely failed to do enough to aid nations in ecological trouble by taking meaningful steps to reduce widespread suffering and poverty.

"Such population pressure, coupled with a crumbling world economy and unchecked exploitation of natural resources, will only foment human suffering, spread poverty, reduce human security, cause more conflicts, and further degrade the environment," he said. "A sustainable perestroika is needed to revolutionize how people value life: their own, those of their children, and, critically, that of the one planet we share."

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