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WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
MEETS IN JOHANNESBURG

Aim: Improving Lives While Preserving Earth's Resources

Freetown – Faced with an alarming deterioration in the earth's ecosystems, global leaders will gather at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September to pursue new initiatives on the implementation of sustainable development and the building of a prosperous and secure future for their citizens.

The Johannesburg Summit promises to be one of the largest and most important international meetings ever held on the integration of economic, environmental and social decision-making. It will focus on building a commitment at the highest levels of government and society to better implement Agenda 21, the roadmap for achieving sustainable development adopted at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development – the “Earth Summit” – held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

The official opening of the Summit will take place on Monday, 26 August with an address by South African President Thabo Mbeki. In his capacity as Secretary-General of the Summit, Nitin Desai will then address the plenary, followed by the Executive-Director of the United Nations Environment Programme, Klaus Toepfer. United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan will speak at the opening of the Summit's High-level segment which begins on 2 September.

Sustainable development has been defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It calls for improving the quality of life for all the world's people without increasing the use of natural resources beyond the earth's carrying capacity. Efforts to build a truly sustainable way of life require the integration of action in three key areas: economic growth and equity; conserving natural resources and the environment; and social development.

The World Summit offers a historic opportunity to confront serious and growing threats to human well-being: one third of the world's people live on an income of less than two

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dollars a day; the use of fossil fuels is increasing rapidly; patterns of production and consumption continue to eat up natural resources faster than they can be replenished; three quarters of the world's fisheries are fished to their sustainable limits or beyond; mountain glaciers are melting away; and the world's forests have shrunk in the last decade by an area larger than that of Venezuela.

Those trends can be reversed, but only if decisive action is taken. While action is expensive, the cost of doing nothing is even higher. For example, every year land degradation and desertification cause an estimated \$42 billion in damage and lost income, but the cost to prevent degradation would total only \$2.4 billion a year. However, no amount of money can restore lost biodiversity or bring back plant and animal species once they are extinct.

The international community will be meeting in Johannesburg just as southern Africa is struggling with a drought that has parched the entire region, compounding problems of poverty and HIV/AIDS, and threatening famine. Heads of State and government who will be attending the Summit to forge a new course of action will be joined by representatives from citizen and community groups, as well as business leaders, farmers, scientists and academics, trade unionists, local authorities, women, indigenous people and youth.

Involving more than 100 world leaders, the Summit itself will consist of plenary sessions, round tables and numerous side events, as well as **the** high-level segment from 2 to 4 September. Around the same time, many parallel events will take place in the Johannesburg area. Among them is the Civil Society Global Forum, from 19 August to 4 September.

Also, a one-day business event on 1 September will bring world business leaders together with representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and labour unions as well as government officials. They will discuss initiatives and partnerships towards sustainable development.

Well over 20,000 people have sought accreditation to the Summit, and the South African Government has estimated that the number of people participating in the official Summit, along with the parallel events, could approach 60,000.

Summit Outcomes

The World Summit will result in an implementation plan detailing the priorities and actions that countries will pursue after Johannesburg, as well as a political statement in the form of a "Johannesburg Declaration", to be agreed by world leaders, reaffirming their commitment to work towards sustainable development. While expressing continued support for the goals of Agenda 21, the two documents will specify concrete means of overcoming problems that have hampered the implementation of Agenda 21, with a renewed focus on those activities that can be realized in each priority area.

In addition, the Summit will serve as a platform for the launch of new partnership initiatives known as "Type 2" outcomes – by and between governments, NGOs and businesses, to tackle specific problems and achieve measurable results. Those voluntary initiatives are intended to promote implementation of the government-negotiated final documents – "Type 1" outcomes. Discussions on the partnership initiatives have focused

on the need to allow flexibility without diluting or substituting the responsibility of governments to commit to strong “Type 1” commitments.

Three quarters of the draft implementation plan has been agreed upon and includes significant actions to improve access to water and sanitation, as well as health. Many of the remaining issues, which must still be resolved at Johannesburg, reflect differences and competing interests relating to the use of resources. Also unresolved are proposals for setting firm timetables and targets for action on several issues, such as reducing the number of people who lack access to proper sanitation, increasing the use of renewable energy and phasing out toxic chemicals.

Among the most difficult remaining issues are those involving trade and finance, including debt relief, expanded trade opportunities for developing countries, the impact of subsidies, increased official development assistance (ODA), and improved access to technology for developing countries.

The draft implementation plan that emerged from the last preparatory meeting for the Summit, held in Bali, Indonesia, and which will serve as the basis for negotiations in Johannesburg, addresses eight broad areas where action must be taken. They are poverty eradication; changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production; natural resources and ecosystems; confronting globalization; health and sustainable development; small island developing States; Africa and other regions; and the means of implementation.

According to the draft text, good governance within each country and at the international level is essential for sustainable development. At the domestic level, sound environmental, social and economic policies, democratic institutions responsive to the needs of the people, the rule of law, anti-corruption measures, gender equality and an enabling environment for investment are the basis for sustainable development.

The gap between developed and developing countries points to the continued need for a dynamic and enabling international economic environment that supports international cooperation, particularly in the areas of finance, technology transfer, debt and trade, and global decision-making. Peace, security, and stability are essential for achieving sustainable development and ensuring that it benefits all, the draft text says.

Placing great emphasis on poverty eradication, the draft text stresses the need to launch programmes aimed at meeting the Millennium Development Goals of halving, by 2015, the proportion of people living in poverty and those who lack access to proper sanitation.

In his WEHAB initiative, the Secretary-General has identified five key areas in which the World Summit can make a difference: water and sanitation; energy; health; agricultural productivity; and biodiversity and ecosystem management. Governments have already agreed to a number of significant actions in those areas.

With regard to water and sanitation, the negotiations have resulted in consensus on the need for governments to develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans by 2005, to develop efficient household sanitation systems and improve sanitation in public institutions, especially schools. The Summit talks are guided by the

Millennium Development Goal of halving, by 2015, the proportion of people lacking access to safe drinking water. A similar target for sanitation is under discussion.

The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene for All initiative -- being launched this year by the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council -- a public-private partnership -- aims to provide, by 2015, water and sanitation services and training in hygiene education to more than 1.1 billion people worldwide, in both rural and urban areas.

Consensus has also been reached in negotiations on the need for governments to increase access to modern energy services, such as electricity and clean fuels, by the more than 2 billion people who now lack them. Also agreed is the need to improve energy efficiency and increase the share of renewable sources in the energy mix. The Global Village Energy Partnership, an initiative to be launched at the Summit, aims to provide modern energy services by 2012 to 300 million people worldwide and more than 50,000 communities, with emphasis on schools, hospitals and clinics that were previously without access to energy.

In order to fight disease and reduce environmental health threats, governments have agreed on the need to deliver basic health services to all, including by improving access to essential drugs, immunization services and vaccines, and launching international capacity-building initiatives. Governments also agreed to fulfil their commitments to support the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and to reduce respiratory diseases, including by phasing out lead in gasoline and lead-based paints, and by providing access to cleaner energy.

An initiative to improve environmental health in the South Pacific over the period 2002-2005 is being launched at the Summit, involving 17 governments, more than a dozen intergovernmental organizations and several major non-governmental organizations. The initiative, which aims to develop a regional environmental health strategy and national plans, will be supported by existing public health resources in the South Pacific Community, but seeks some \$420,000 in additional funding.

In the area of agricultural productivity, consensus has already been reached on the need for governments to take an integrated approach to improving food security, including by promoting science-based programmes to increase the productivity of land and the efficient use of water, by adopting policies and laws that guarantee well-defined and enforceable land and water use rights, and by using market-based incentives to promote growth in rural areas. An initiative to promote sustainable agriculture and rural development is being launched at Johannesburg to establish a global resource centre and a small-grant funding mechanism as well as to improve regulatory and policy frameworks.

On biodiversity and ecosystem management, consensus has already been reached on the need for governments to take immediate action to prevent illegal logging and trade in forest products, and to support the conservation of biodiversity, particularly through the appropriate channelling of financial resources and technology to developing countries. One major initiative to be launched at Johannesburg is the Global Conservation Trust, a public-private partnership whose goal is to establish during 2002-2004 an endowment fund of \$260 million for the conservation of plant genetic resources around the world.
