



JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT 2002

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT | JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA | 26 AUGUST–4 SEPTEMBER 2002

UN, South African Flags Raised Over Sandton Conference Centre in Johannesburg

Johannesburg, 23 August—South African Foreign Minister Nkosazana Zuma symbolically handed over the Sandton Conference Centre, the site of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, to the United Nations today at a flag raising ceremony.

The raising of the UN and South African flags in front of the Centre marked the official start of the UN presence in Johannesburg, with the Centre assuming the status of international territory.

Calling the Summit “one of the most important conferences,” Zuma, speaking at the ceremony, said the Summit would determine “how this family of humanity will deal with our common heritage.”

The Summit, Zuma said, was not only about putting together a plan for action, but also for establishing a mechanism for sustainable development, with the necessary financing. “At the end of the day, it is about implementation.”

Accepting the handover on behalf of the United Nations, Johannesburg Summit Secretary-General Nitin Desai praised the South African government for the work they have done to prepare for the Summit. “They have done a fantastic job. They pulled out all the stops.” Thanking South Africa for their efforts in Zulu, he said “Ngiyabonga South Africa, Ngiyabonga Johannesburg.”

Desai pointed out that much had changed since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. “Ten years ago when we met at the Earth Summit, South Africa was not even present. Today it is the host country.”

More than 100 presidents and prime ministers, along with thousands of government representatives, NGOs and business leaders, are expected to attend the Summit, which marks an historic opportunity to commit to actions that will improve people’s lives and protect the environment.

The official opening of the Summit will take place on Monday, 26 August, with an address by South African President Thabo Mbeki. Mr. Desai will then formally address the plenary, followed by United Nations Environment Programme Executive Director Klaus Topfer.



UNITED NATIONS

JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT 2002



WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT | JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA | 26 AUGUST-4 SEPTEMBER 2002

There will be informal consultations among delegations on the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation over the weekend, but official negotiations will begin immediately after the opening session.

In a departure from traditional conference practice, special plenary sessions that will take the form of “moderated conversations,” will be held starting on Monday dealing with issues where the Summit is expected to bring results, such as in increasing the number of people who have access to clean water and proper sanitation, increasing access to modern energy services, improving agricultural productivity, and ensuring the protection of the world’s biodiversity and natural ecosystems.

Media Contacts for the Johannesburg Summit:

Klomjit Chandrapanya, tel. (27 11) 508-0371, cell 083-296-2428; or Pragati Pascale, tel: (27 11) 508-0923, cell 083-296-2393

In New York: Meredith Mishel, tel. (212) 584-5031

E-mail: mediainfo@un.org; Website: www.johannesburgsummit.org