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Many Summit Goals Realized At Midpoint

Johannesburg, 31 August—The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg reached its midpoint with significant agreements on a wide range of issues and major announcements on resources and partnerships, yet full agreement on a Programme of Implementation is still dependent on a breakthrough on some of the toughest issues.

Several of the Summit's objectives have already been met, according to Johannesburg Summit Secretary-General Nitin Desai. "One of the main goals of the Summit was to have the international community reaffirm their support for implementing Agenda 21 and the Millennium Declaration goals, and that has happened," Desai said. "The Summit was also intended to accelerate implementation of sustainable development, and from the announcements of significant new resources and partnerships, that has happened. And lastly, we sought to put sustainable development back on the international agenda and in the global consciousness, and without question, that too has happened."

Desai added that it was still important to get commitments from governments in the final outcome document, but stressed that the important aim of the Summit, from the outset, has been to encourage actual implementation, not the negotiation or renegotiation of goals and principles. "What we want, more than anything else, is to encourage governments, community citizen groups, and the private sector to act in a sustainable way. We need large-scale implementation efforts that will have a tangible and beneficial impact on people's lives and the environment."

The negotiations have cleared about 95 per cent of the Plan of Implementation, although technically, nothing is officially agreed until everything is agreed. Still, consensus has been reached on agreements on a wide range of issues, including commitments to improve access to clean water, proper sanitation, and modern and clean energy. Also agreed are provisions and funding that will improve agricultural productivity and combat desertification, and reduce the health risks from pollution and water-borne diseases, as well as a host of provisions aimed at improving biodiversity and ecosystem management.

But negotiations on the final document are still focused on several important outstanding issues, including targets for expanding access to sanitation and achieving a certain level of renewable energy, subsidies, and a provision urging the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol on climate change.

Among the significant agreements reached in the negotiations are provisions to take action on the five areas that UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan suggested that the Summit tackle. A list of these commitments, which is not exhaustive, includes:

- Commitment to launch programmes to achieve the goal of halving the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water.
- Commitment to develop and implement initiatives to increase access to proper sanitation facilities in homes and institutions, especially schools.
- Commitment to increase access to modern energy services for the two billion people who lack them.
- Commitment to establish programmes that will boost energy efficiency and increase the use of renewable energy.
- Commitment to establish policies that will level the playing field for renewable and cleaner fossil fuel energy and technologies.
- Commitment to phase out by 2020 the use and production of chemicals that harm human health and the environment.
- Commitment to restore fisheries to their maximum sustainable yields by 2015.
- Commitment to establish a representative network of marine protected areas by 2012.
- Commitment to implement the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land Based Sources of Pollution by 2004.
- Commitment to improve developing countries' access to environmentally-sound alternatives to ozone depleting chemicals by 2010.
- Commitment to take immediate action on domestic forest law enforcement and the international trade in forest products.
- Commitment to finance activities for the Convention to Combat Desertification through the Global Environment Facility.
- Commitment to enhance the role of women at all levels and in all aspects of rural development, agriculture, nutrition, and food security.
- Commitment to replenish the Global Environment Facility at a record level of \$2.92 billion.

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