



UNITED NATIONS

JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT 2002



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

Johannesburg Summit To Open Monday With Focus on Action

Johannesburg, 25—Determined to overcome a decade of disappointing results in efforts to reverse environmental degradation and combat poverty, the World Summit on Sustainable Development is set to open tomorrow, Monday, with a sharp focus on finding ways to get things done.

The more than 100 world leaders who will attend the Summit, along with thousands of government delegates, NGOs and business representatives will spend the next 10 days working to chart the actions that are needed to improve the lives of people while protecting the environment.

“There are high expectations for the Summit,” according to South African Foreign Minister Nkosazana Zuma. “We have to make sure the dreams and aspirations of millions of people are met, now and for future generations.” The Summit, she added, was a place for the world to come together to shape what will be done to address problems of poverty eradication, education, health services, access to water and sanitation, energy and the environment.

“I think what will make a successful summit is the political will to make it a success,” Zuma said. “I have not heard any delegation say they have come to make sure that the Summit does not succeed.”

“The Earth Summit in Rio was about changing the way people think about development and the environment, according to Summit Secretary-General Nitin Desai. “Johannesburg is about changing the way we act. It’s about implementation.”

Calling the atmosphere during the two days of preliminary consultations on the Summit outcome documents “very constructive,” Desai said he expected the Summit to result in specific actions on expanding access to clean water and proper sanitation facilities, modern energy services, increased agricultural productivity, and protection of biodiversity and management of ecosystems.

The need for action is great. A recent United Nations report found that if current patterns of development continue, nearly half of the world's people will suffer from water shortages within the next 25 years; the use of fossil fuels, along with greenhouse gas emissions,



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will grow; and the world's forests will continue to disappear.

The large numbers of people who have come to Johannesburg, Zuma said, show the high level of interest in the Summit. Already, more than a day before the official opening, 4,179 delegates, 3,062 NGOs, and 2,103 media representatives have been accredited to the Summit, for a total of 9,344 people. Attendance is expected to increase sharply when the Heads of State and Government arrive at the start of next week.

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

In a departure from traditional conference practice, special plenary sessions that will take the form of “moderated conversations,” will be held from Monday through Wednesday. These will deal with the major issues on which the Summit is expected to bring results, particularly water, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity.

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