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Press Release

Bali PrepCom Seen as Major Opportunity to Reach Agreement on a Sustainable Future

(Bali, 20 May) — Negotiations on the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development — the Summit that will chart a new course of action for smarter development that works for people and the environment — are now shifting to Bali, Indonesia, where the international community will hammer out details of exactly what must be done.

In a mark of the importance of the Bali negotiations, official delegations will be represented at the Ministerial level in an effort to achieve the political consensus that will be endorsed by the world leaders attending the Johannesburg Summit.

The Summit, which will be one of the largest gatherings of world leaders ever held, will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002. It is expected to provide the impetus for specific actions that will comprise a major departure from business as usual, towards a new approach to development that recognizes the interdependency of economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

“It is time to take the road not taken,” said Nitin Desai, Johannesburg Summit Secretary-General. “It is time to try new approaches that can improve the lives of everyone without destroying the environment. If we try, we have everything to gain and nothing to lose.”

The framework for sustainable development was agreed by all countries at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. Yet in the ten years since Rio, the cumulative results of efforts to put it into action have been far from satisfactory. Most of the objectives of Agenda 21, the action plan for sustainable development that was adopted in Rio, have not been met.

“We have to implement sustainable development on a grander scale,” Desai said. “We have to move beyond a fragmented, ad hoc and pilot-programme type of approach. We have to think big and go to scale, so that we can start to see the pay-off, in economic, social and environmental terms, that sustainable development can bring us.”

Resources may already be available to make things happen. At the recent Financing for Development conference in Mexico, many countries, and in particular the European Union and the United States, committed themselves to an additional \$30 billion in development aid through 2006. “If we can come up with a good programme of action, there is money for new initiatives to confront challenges such as the need for safe drinking water and sustainable energy,” Desai commented.

The Bali meeting, the fourth session of the Summit Preparatory Committee, will start with informal negotiations on 24-26 May, and then continue with the official discussions from 27 May to 7 June. Some 6,000 participants are slated to attend, including 140 countries with a total of over 400 Ministerial-level delegates. Plans are that the President of Indonesia will open the high-level segment, which runs from 5 to 7 June.

Challenging negotiations

The Bali PrepCom is expected to result in a negotiated implementation document and elements of a political declaration that will be endorsed by the heads of State and Government who attend the Summit in Johannesburg. Negotiations on the outcome of the Johannesburg Summit continue to prove challenging, and at two previous

preparatory meetings held in New York this year, participants in the process worked to hone in on the areas where action is essential. These areas include reducing poverty, preserving natural ecosystems and resources, expanding access to clean water, improved sanitation and electricity, changing harmful patterns of consumption and production, and focusing special attention on Africa.

In a major departure from previous conferences, the Johannesburg Summit is expected to result in the announcement of new partnership initiatives aimed at achieving results. While not a substitute for government responsibilities, the new partnerships offer an exciting opportunity for all groups, whether governments, businesses or citizen organizations, to add enthusiasm and know-how to push implementation efforts forward.

“What I want is an action plan of deliverables,” said Dr. Emil Salim of Indonesia, Chairman of the Summit’s Preparatory Committee. “The question is, do we want a cleaner world and a better world, or do we want business as usual?” he asked. “If we continue as we have done in the past, we will sink.”

Along with government delegates, the PrepCom will also bring over a thousand business leaders, local government officials, and representatives of citizen groups and non-governmental organizations to the Bali International Convention Centre, in the Nusa Dua area. They will participate in a special multi-stakeholder dialogue session on 27-29 May, as well as observing the negotiations. An unofficial People’s Forum is being organized at a nearby venue by Indonesian NGOs, and many special events and exhibits are planned.

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