



JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT 2002

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

Press Release

Countries Edge Closer to a Meeting of Minds on Outcome for World Summit on Sustainable Development

New York, 18 July — Countries moved significantly closer toward agreement on the most difficult issues that have blocked consensus on the outcome document for next month's World Summit on Sustainable Development at a special meeting convened here yesterday by South African President Thabo Mbeki as Chairman of the Summit.

The talks, attended by high-level delegates from 27 countries, concluded late last night with indications that convergence was near on many of the most contentious issues, including trade and finance concerns, and setting new targets and timetables for achieving progress in poverty alleviation and environmental protection.

About three-quarters of the implementation plan was agreed upon at the last preparatory meeting for the Summit in Bali, Indonesia. The one-day meeting in New York was held to find common ground so that countries could bridge the remaining differences quickly in Johannesburg. The meeting itself was not a negotiation session, but rather, an exchange of views of delegations to find the contours of an agreement.

"There is more hope now than there was at the end of Bali," South African Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma said as the meeting concluded. "I do not see major differences in the positions of the delegations. It should not take long to get an agreement in Johannesburg."

Zuma added that it was important, for the success of the Summit, that all world leaders attend. She said, "We want to see everyone in Johannesburg."

To ensure the success of the negotiations, proposals are being considered to add two extra days for consultations before the Summit officially opens.

United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan said he, along with President Mbeki, had initiated the idea for the meeting yesterday so that "Member States arrive in Johannesburg with a clear idea of how the negotiations can succeed and, in turn, result in the launch of concrete initiatives."

The Secretary-General urged countries not to renegotiate prior agreements, particularly those reached at the World Trade Organization meeting in Doha last November, and at the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey last March. He called for countries to focus on achieving results in the five key areas of water and sanitation, energy, health, agriculture and biodiversity.

The new agreement gives a major boost to the Summit, which will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September. The Summit, which will be attended by world

leaders and representatives of citizen groups and businesses, offers an historic opportunity to confront serious and growing threats to human well-being: a third of the world's people live on an income of less than two dollars a day, use of fossil fuels is rising 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 slowly melting away and the world's forests have shrunk in the last decade by an area larger than Venezuela.

"There was a real change in attitude and atmosphere here," Johannesburg Summit Secretary-General Nitin Desai commented as yesterday's meeting concluded. "Countries have shown a great willingness to move forward and seek convergence. There was a good deal of movement — it isn't tangible yet, but the progress is perceptible."

The 27 countries invited by President Mbeki to attend the meeting as "Friends of the Chair" include Argentina, Brazil, Canada, China, Denmark, Egypt, France, Germany, Ghana, India, Indonesia, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Mexico, Nigeria, Norway, Russian Federation, Samoa, Senegal, Spain, Sweden, Uganda, United Kingdom, United States and Venezuela. Many other countries also attended as observers.

Media contacts

Until 16 August:

Klomjit Chandrapanya, tel. (212) 963-9495

Pragati Pascale, tel. (212) 963-6870

Gavin Hart or Meredith Mishel, tel. (212) 584-5031

After 16 August: In New York, (212) 584-5031; see website for contacts in Johannesburg

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