

Comments submitted by Brazil on the possibility of holding a high level event on
sustainable development
26th May 2009

Background

1. The Government of Brazil welcomes the opportunity to submit views on the possibility of convening a high-level event on sustainable development in preparation of the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, in response to an invitation by the Secretariat as referred to in General Assembly resolution 63/212, paragraph 5.

2. Reference is made to the Concept Paper of 11 November 2008 (attached to this document), which set out the initial views of Brazil on a United Nations conference on sustainable development in 2012, including reasons, proposed themes and possible results. This paper further elaborates on the issues raised therein with a view to contributing to the discussions at the General Assembly.

3. At the outset, Brazil renews its commitment to holding a Conference on sustainable development in 2012 in Rio de Janeiro. We appreciate the support we have received from countries and groups, especially the Group of 77 and China. We are committed to engaging with the wider membership, through the appropriate bodies of the United Nations, for preparations in an inclusive, transparent and results-oriented manner.

Areas for action

4. Building on Brazil's initial proposal, the 2012 UN conference could address four thematic areas or clusters: (A) Review of implementation; (B) International governance for sustainable development; (C) Global pact around "Green Economy"; and (D) Water

A – Review of implementation

5. The review of implementation will evaluate the long-term commitments for sustainable development that the international community agreed to at UNCED and afterwards, including the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Many of the goals therein should be attained by 2012. The focus should be on how to bridge implementation gaps, including by the provision of adequate and predictable financing.

A three-pronged approach is suggested:

(i). Review of the implementation of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which sets out the principles for international cooperation on sustainable development;

(ii). Review of the implementation of Agenda 21 and the 25,000 recommendations therein, the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. This task is linked to the contribution of the

Commission on Sustainable Development, the body tasked with following-up on these commitments; and

(iii). Review of the implementation of the three Rio Conventions: CBD, UNFCCC, UNCCD. Since each Convention is independent and have their own governing bodies, it is intended that the preparatory process will involve dialogue with the conferences of the parties, in a manner similar to their engagement in the General Assembly and CSD. The purpose of evaluating the implementation of the Conventions is to provide input for the broader evaluation of implementation of sustainable development commitments, and not to detract from or establish parallel tracks of negotiation. For the UNFCCC, 2012 will mark the conclusion of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol. The 2012 Conference will provide an opportunity to contribute to the review of its implementation.

B – International governance for sustainable development

6. Notwithstanding the international consensus on the need for enhanced coordination and cooperation among international organizations and environmental agreements, diverging views remain on how to reform the current United Nations system so as to enhance its efficiency for driving sustainable development. Overcoming this impasse requires a broader and integrated reflection in lieu of the fragmented approaches which have been attempted so far.

7. The 2012 conference could aim at debating on governance through a reform of the institutions currently involved in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in the UN system, with an emphasis on the CSD and UNEP. There is an increasing perception that CSD faces challenges in fulfilling its fundamental roles - to confer political orientation, promote dialogue and partnerships and foster coherence among implementation actions. Likewise, UNEP must be rethought so as to improve how it carries out its functions: to facilitate dialogue in different fora; consolidate and divulge data and information; promote cooperation and coordination between environmental Conventions; and assist developing countries to implement the Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

8. The 2012 Conference can offer an important point of convergence for deliberation on the reform of the international institutions for sustainable development, while also catalyzing high-level political commitment for the outcome .

9. The preparatory process for the Conference would provide the necessary space for evaluating the proposals on the institutional framework for enhanced international governance for sustainable development, including by building on ongoing political discussions and informal processes.

C – “Green economy”

10. The response to the economic and financial crises has highlighted the need to reinstate the role of the State both as regulator and driver for sustainable development. The packages and plans put together as a response provide an opportunity for ensuring that the economic recovery is driven towards both social and environmental sustainability, thus bringing forth a greener, more sustainable economy where the three pillars are dialectically integrated.

11. It is vital to ensure that the Millennium Development Goals be attained by 2015. But securing those goals is only part of the answer to transform the vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment into a virtuous cycle where prosperity is coupled with sustainability at the economic, social and environmental levels. In-depth structural changes are required to sustain that transformation.

12. Whereas there has been widespread perception that the integration of the economic, social and environmental pillars of development is essential for providing adequate and sustainable responses to the global multiple crises, the concept of “green economy” has been used in the contexts of various differing approaches. A UN conference on sustainable development in 2012 would offer an opportunity to consolidate a broad-reaching agreement around the evolving paradigm of “green economy”, and allow for the involvement of a large spectrum of stakeholders (governments, civil society, businesses, academia, and so forth).

13. Translating the concept of “green economy” into nationally appropriate measures is a complex challenge. There are no universally applicable solutions: several alternatives of reform, regulation, fiscal stimulus, capacity building and prioritization of sectors and regions should be analyzed. These efforts must result from an in-depth dialogue with civil society and the private sector.

14. Stimulating the world economy through policies that give priority to sustainable patterns of consumption and production may prove to be a win-win approach, with the potential to generate environmental, social and economic benefits. New investment opportunities - in fields such as energy, transport, agriculture and infrastructure - can be coupled with incentives to sustainable innovation and technology transfer.

15. The resulting creation of “green jobs” would provide additional income and skills for the workforce, with significant impacts on poverty alleviation and enhanced prosperity, especially for developing countries. The transition towards the new model requires ample mobilization of the international community, in order to establish a renewed engagement for sustainable development and ensure the consistency of policies at all levels.

16. Financing and technology transfer are two elements that require cooperation at all levels among countries. They are crucial stepping stones for the success of the “green economy”. According to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, the financial and technological support provided by developed countries to developing ones should be enhanced. South-South cooperation should also be fostered.

D. Water

17. Water is essential for socioeconomic development and for maintaining the integrity of the environment. Its importance for the three pillars of sustainable development is recognized in the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (1992), the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the Millennium Development Goals. Rio+20 would enable an integrated assessment of the challenges to the implementation of the commitments contained in those documents, by sharing experiences and strengthening the engagement of all relevant stakeholders.

18. Access to water is a theme that must be considered in the light of Principles 2 and 3 of the Rio Declaration, on the sovereign rights of States to explore their natural resources in accordance with their national policies and the right to development, respectively. States must take national measures aiming at universalizing access to water and sanitation, in accordance with Chapter 18 of Agenda 21. The international community must support those national efforts through cooperation, provision of financial resources – including new and additional financial resources – technology transfer and capacity-building. By seeking to enhance cooperation in those aspects, Rio+20 will contribute to the implementation of national policies on water resources, thus enabling each State to fulfill its obligation towards its citizens.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

19. Rio+20 is intended to be a process, with the 2012 summit as its pinnacle. In this sense, the preparatory process will be crucial for the success of Rio+20. Differently from Rio-92, a new conceptual framework is not intended as the main outcome. Such as Rio+10, Rio+20 would aim at translating sustainable development into concrete actions, by ensuring the provision of the required means of implementation.

20. The following outcomes for Rio+20 could be explored:

- a) A comprehensive political declaration that would indicate new areas of convergence and consolidate the international consensus on the paradigm of “green economy”; to recall and reaffirm Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation; identify gaps and propose actions for bridging them.
- b) A plan of action for the achievement of the objectives set forth by the Conference, including with regard to the implementation of the “green economy” paradigm.

PREPARATORY PROCESS

21. The main objective of setting 2012 as a deadline for the conclusion of the process is to channel attention to the implementation of Agenda 21 in each country, in order for it to be prioritized. In order to ensure the efficiency of the preparatory process, lessons learned from previous processes should be taken into account.

22. Preparations for Rio+20, in a context of the global economic slowdown, present practical difficulties, especially with regards to its financing. Nevertheless, such obstacles should not stop the convening of the Conference, which should be viewed as contributing to the global effort to respond to the crises and create conditions for the structural changes required to promote sustainable development.

23. The preparatory process should go beyond the establishment of National Commissions for the review of implementation of Agenda 21. The process should identify additional mechanisms for further implementing the commitments. At the regional level, the Regional Economic Commissions of the United Nations could provide platforms for reflecting on the format of the Summit.

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25. The Conference preparation at the global level would take place under the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, which would meet as a preparatory committee, in parallel to its 2004-17 Program of Work. Holding the Conference in 2012 would enable us to retrieve the long-term perspective on the promotion of sustainable development, which has been somewhat lacking in the clustered treatment of Agenda 21 through the biennial cycles of the Commission.

26. It should be noted that the themes for the 2010-11, 2012-13 and 2014-15 cycles of the Multi-year Program of Work of CSD have been included with the following caveat: "This thematic cluster will remain as part of the multi-year program of work as scheduled, unless otherwise agreed by the Commission"(document E/CN.17/2003/6, p. 12).

27. This would justify proceeding to evaluate the work done by the Commission even before the 2017 conclusion of the work cycle. This review may very well inspire a renewed vitality and facilitate the work of the Commission, by identifying areas of convergence and preparing the field for a more integrated and crosscutting approach of the issues under its scrutiny, in the five concluding years of the Program of Work.

28. It is desirable that the General Assembly takes a decision on Rio+20 during its 64th Session. Thus, it would be advisable to examine ways of harmonizing the preparations for the Conference with the CSD Program of Work, possibly during CSD-18 and CSD-19 (2010-11).

CONCLUSIONS

29. The responses to the ongoing financial, economic and food crises, as well as to the challenges posed by climate change, will be decisive to steer the course of sustainable development. In light of these challenges, there is the need for an urgent and strong political message that sustainable development continues to demand attention at the highest political level. The 2012 Conference would be a driving force for action, helping to engage governments, civil society, the productive sector and the scientific community around an international cooperative effort to promote sustainable development. The meeting would also be a source of inspiration for the new and upcoming generations of scientists, leaders, activists, businessmen, youth and women who did not have the chance to participate in the previous conferences.

30. The 2012 Conference would thus provide the opportunity to enable and consolidate a consensus on responding to the challenge through sustainable growth. It could foster the debate on certain issues in the international agenda that have evolved throughout the past decade, such as international governance for sustainable development and water.

31. The Conference would be a new link in the twenty-year cycle of international negotiations for sustainable development and inaugurate a new era of cooperation for a sustainable future, anchored in the principle of intergenerational equity.

32. The focus on sustainable development should encompass, in an integrated manner, its economic, social and environmental pillars. The need to treat the current challenges in a crosscutting perspective, to broaden debate on the attainment of the MDGs as well as to bring about the structural changes required for sustainable development should guide the efforts at the Conference.

33. The implementation of actions leading to sustainable development depends, on a global scale, on the provision of the necessary means of implementation. Thus, the issue of financing sustainable development is closely related to the themes of the 2012 Conference, with due consideration given, inter alia, to the Monterrey Consensus.

34. The overall objective of the Conference will be to strengthen commitment to sustainable development. A crucial requirement for that goal to be achieved is the strengthening international institutions and organizations with activities related to sustainable development. Thus they will be enabled to adequately, within their respective mandates, lend support to regional, national and local institutions, while respecting the priorities of countries and take due consideration of the special needs of developing countries, from the perspective of the right to development.

**RIO+20 CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CONCEPT PAPER**

**Government of Brazil
11 November 2008**

I. THE IMPORTANCE OF CONVENING A CONFERENCE

1. A new United Nations conference on sustainable development is needed in order to create the political momentum for concentrating disparate actions, channeling efforts and taking broad-reaching decisions on the agenda of sustainable development. A Rio+20 in 2012 provides a timeframe for achieving concrete results stemming from specific policies and actions. The meeting would serve, in this regard, as a stimulus for action.

II. CONFERENCE THEMES

2. The conference's main subject will be the revision of the implementation of commitments agreed upon at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio-92, with special attention to three thematic areas: the Rio Declaration, the environmental conventions and Agenda 21. The implementation of the targets and decisions from the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10) will also be reviewed.

3. The first area is on a shared vision about the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the document that sets the principles and guidelines which inform international cooperation for sustainable development. It is necessary to promote discussions on the implementation of these principles and assessing how they have informed the post-1992 environmental negotiations.

4. The second thematic area addresses the environmental conventions which arose from the 1992 Earth Summit: the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), signed in 1992, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), from 1994. These multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) would receive special emphasis at Rio+20. The decisions adopted under each convention depend on building consensus between Parties, the ability they find to conciliate different interests, and the confidence on the reciprocal fulfillment of obligations.

5. Rio+20 would allow for an analysis on how the environmental issues pertinent to each Rio Convention are being addressed, which commitments are not being implemented, how to solve any implementation gap and how to assure adequate and predictable international financing for these efforts. In the case of the UNFCCC, 2012 will mark the end of the first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol, a timely occasion for reviewing its fulfillment.

6. It is not intended that at the new summit these negotiations be re-opened for negotiation, since this discussion would be the responsibility of the Parties to each

instrument. The agenda of the second thematic area of debates would be established in a consensual and inclusive process, by decentralized decisions taken by the conferences of the Parties to each Rio Convention, in the preparatory process for Rio+20.

7. Another challenge related to the second thematic area is the improvement of the coordination and cooperation between international organizations and the MEAs. The conference might conclude the debate on international environmental governance by means of a reform of the current international institutions on sustainable development. This might be an important theme for the preparatory process.

8. The third thematic area of a Rio+20 would be the revision of the implementation of Agenda 21, which consists of a program of action with 2500 recommendations to promote sustainable development throughout the 21st century. The conference would review the level of implementation of the Program in each of its four sections, namely: the social and economic dimensions; the conservation and use of resources for development; strengthening the role of major groups; and means of implementation.

9. This task will depend largely on the contribution of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which is tasked with monitoring the progress in implementation of Agenda 21 and the follow-up to the Rio and Johannesburg conferences. Thus, Rio+20 would evaluate the role of the CSD of providing political guidance, promoting dialogue and partnerships, and fostering coherence between implementation actions.

10. Finally, the three thematic areas should maintain their focus on the sustainable development paradigm. The debate cannot be reduced to environmental matters, which constitute one aspect of sustainable development. The adequate integration of the social and economic pillars is necessary to ensure the cross-cutting treatment of the current challenges. Because sustainable development is a concept broader than its environmental pillar, involving matters related to economic and social development, the decisions traditionally associated with the environment must be connected, in a cross-cutting manner, for example by addressing also the fundamental issues on achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Since the implementation of strictly environmental issues depends on the real contribution of means of implementation, the question of financing for development is also closely linked to the theme of Rio+20, taking into account the consideration, among others, of the Monterrey Consensus. The proposed solutions must lead to the strengthening of institutions and international organizations that promote sustainable development, respecting their mandates and supporting regional, national and local relevant institutions. Such measures also must respect the needs of all countries, taking into account the specific needs and priorities of developing countries.

III. RIO+20 RESULTS

11. Rio+20 is not intended to be only a conference, but also a process, with the 2012 summit as its pinnacle. In this sense, the preparatory process will be crucial for a successful Rio+20. Differently from Rio-92, a new conceptual framework is not intended as the main outcome. Such as Rio+10, Rio+20 would strive to translate sustainable

development into concrete actions, by ensuring the provision of the required means of implementation. Greater emphasis will be placed on its preparatory process in relation to Rio+10. In this sense, the main objective of setting 2012 as a deadline for the conclusion of the process is to channel attention to the implementation of Agenda 21 in each country, in order for it to be prioritized.

12. The preparatory process should go beyond the establishment of National Commissions for the review of implementation of Agenda 21. The process shall identify additional mechanisms for further implementing this agenda. In the regional sphere, meetings of the Regional Economic Commissions of the United Nations could provide platforms for proposing issue-areas for the Summit. The Conference preparation on the global level would take place under the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, which would meet as a preparatory committee.

IV. REASONS FOR A RIO+20

13. The General Assembly is mandated to provide overall political guidance on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the JPOI. It does so routinely through the CSD, under the ECOSOC.

14. However, the current food and financial crises have shown that the challenges before us require redoubling our efforts. There is an urgent need for a strong and urgent political signal from the General Assembly that sustainable development continues to merit the highest political attention

15. Furthermore, by 2012, several commitments agreed upon in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation will have met their deadlines.

16. A Rio+20 would:

- i) Examine and renew, at the highest level, the long-term political commitments made since the Rio Summit and review the fulfillment of the commitments deriving from the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation;
- ii) Provide the opportunity to seek consensus in areas of the sustainable development agenda that have evolved considerably in the past decade, such as international environmental governance and the production and use of renewable sources of energy;
- iii) Address the gaps in implementation of Agenda 21 and the multilateral environmental agreements;
- iv) Strengthen the role of governments, major groups and other stakeholders, such as the private sector, through partnerships for the implementation of the sustainable development agenda;

v) Contribute to, not detract from, other processes, such as the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the environmental conventions, by deepening engagements with sustainable development;

vi) Not renegotiate agreed instruments and documents;

vii) Mark the completion of a 20-year cycle of environmental negotiations, sending a strong political signal and marking the beginning of a new period of engagement of the international community.

V. RELATED ISSUES

Relation to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and its Multi-Year Programme of Work (2004-2017)

17. The CSD has been fulfilling its role to provide guidance, on behalf of the United Nations General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council, for the implementation of Agenda 21 and related instruments.

18. Brazil is concerned with the path the CSD's works have taken, since, at the last policy session (2007), it could not adopt an agreed outcome. The CSD should be strengthened and recognized as an important body to further sustainable development in the context of the United Nations.

19. The preparatory process for Rio+20 would build on and complement the work of the CSD, which would continue to meet according to its Programme of Work.

20. Rio+20 would afford an opportunity for a mid-term appraisal of the CSD work cycle. It will also be an important stepping-stone for the MDG's review conference in 2015.

Timing for a decision on the matter

21. A decision during the 63rd Session of the General Assembly would:

- i) Kick-start discussions on the agenda of the Conference
- ii) Allow for sufficient time for meetings of preparatory committee for the Rio+20, which would be established under the CSD, without prejudice to its Programme of Work (3 meetings per year in 2010 and 2011, meeting back-to-back to CSD sessions);
- iii) Enable an adequate preparatory process, which would ensure active participation at all levels;
- iv) Allow for an appropriate budgetary planning.

Relation to other international conferences

22. None of the environmental conferences that are scheduled to take place have an overarching approach of sustainable development, such as the Rio+20 would have, since

they have their own specific mandates and conventions. The sense of urgency associated with the serious environmental issues nowadays justifies holding a high-level conference.

Value-added to ongoing processes

23. A Rio+20 would allow for a broad overview of the different issues that are under negotiation under the various processes, with a view to providing political momentum to address the implementation gaps.