

# SD21 – Stakeholder Forum



## **Review of Agenda 21 and Rio Declaration**

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## **1. Agenda 21**

*- 40 Chapters*

## **2. Rio Declaration**

*- 27 Principles*

## **3. Synthesis report**

*- Conclusions and recommendations*

# Agenda 21 - Successes



- Arguably the biggest success has come through driving ambition on what sustainable outcomes are achievable on a sector by sector basis, e.g. biodiversity.
- Engendered a much stronger notion of participation in decision-making, e.g. Major Groups.
- Local Agenda 21 has been one of the most extensive follow-up programmes.

# Agenda 21 - Challenges



- Sectors-basis may have contributed to defeating the concept of integration that is at the heart of sustainable development.
- Globally, consumption and production patterns remain unsustainable.
- Some sectors were not included in Agenda 21, e.g. energy and mining.
- Other sectors today may be prominent than their space in Agenda 21, for example transport and waste flows.
- Lost Chapter 41 - Transnational Corporations.

# Agenda 21 - Conclusions



- Agenda 21 retains strong relevance, and remains the most comprehensive undertaking by the UN system to promote sustainable development.
- While there are some gaps in coverage, the issues that humanity is struggling with now are more or less similar those covered by the chapters of Agenda 21.
- Agenda 21 has acquired considerable coverage amongst nation states, its implementation remains far from universal or effective.
- And progress has been patchy, and despite some elements of good practice most Agenda 21 outcomes have still not been realised.

# Rio Principles - Successes



- As a soft law instrument, successful implementation of the Rio Declaration takes many shapes and can be loosely understood through analysing the various 'offspring' agreements or national laws.
- Principle 5 – eradicating poverty and raising the standards of living for all, e.g. MDGs.
- Principle 10 – access to justice, information and public participation – is the foundation of the successful regional instrument that enshrines the principle in the Aarhus Convention.
- Principle 15 – the precautionary principle – is widely accepted as a foundation of environmental law at both the national and international levels.

# Rio Principles - Challenges



- Principle 5 - “reducing disparities in standards of living”, has been relatively forgotten.
- Principle 10 - Additionally access to justice remains a barrier for many who seek legal redress for environmental damages or concerns.
- Around the polluter pays principle (Principle 16) there remain ideological differences to its practical application.
- Principle 8 – sustainable production and consumption and the promotion of appropriate demographic policies – is deemed to have been unsuccessful in achieving its intended goal.

# Rio Principles - Conclusions



- The Rio Principles are the heir to the Stockholm principles agreed in 1972, and both have a primary focus on environment and development.
- This framework left largely open interpretations about how to achieve sustainable development in practice.
- Overall, the gaps remain because of the difficulty faced with transposing soft law principles into implementable law.



# SD21 - Recommendations



- Stronger implementation strategy e.g. guidelines for implementation
- Lost chapter -> Convention on CSRA
- Long term thinking in institutions e.g. UN High Commissioner for Future Generations
- Long term thinking in global economy e.g. sustainability in sovereign wealth funds, credit rating agencies, pension funds