

# **Civil Society Statement on World Summit on Sustainable Development**

## **Seventh Governing Council Special Session Caratgena, Columbia. February 2002**

Distinguished delegates,

I would be failing in my duty if I did not bring to your attention a growing number of misgivings about the current situation. On the one hand civil society is here with you today because we believe that in this forum, and in other forums like this, momentous decisions will be made for the future of humankind.

On the other hand, the air whispers that all is not as it appears, that ten years after Rio the word has not become flesh. Commitment has not been translated into action. Political will has not made itself manifest and that it is all futile, useless, and of no consequence whatsoever.

We want to express our great concern about the outcomes of the Prepcom II of the WSSD. These outcomes do not address fundamental obstacles to sustainable development.

Democracy is a prerequisite to sustainability. Without deeper democratisation, extending to environmental goods and services, there is no possibility to advance to sustainability

### **Rights and Ethics based approach to Sustainable Development**

There is a clear need for an ethical dimension incorporated into the sustainable development debate. There must be a rights-based approach to SD. Environmental rights should encompass substantial and procedural rights. The principle common but differentiated responsibilities must be strictly adhered to.

The eradication of poverty—in all its forms, including economic, environmental, and cultural poverty, as well as social exclusion, should be a priority, and addressed in a holistic manner. Environmental degradation affects the poor first. The basis for poverty eradication should be equitable sustainable development. Poverty eradication is not possible without environmental justice, redistribution of the Earth's resources, and recognition of the ecological debt. Poverty eradication is only possible if production and consumption are sustainable and if ecosystems are managed in a way that allows communities to derive their benefits. This means finding financial mechanisms to directly support small-scale initiatives by those communities that protect and sustainably manage those ecosystems.

### **Reforming the economic system for supporting sustainable development**

From UNCED to WSSD, the development paradigm fostered by governments has shifted from one based on co-operation to one based on competition.

In efforts to reform the present international financial architecture, there is a need for

- greater synergy between FFD and WSSD processes.
- Monterey should provide major inputs into WSSD.
- clear sustainability criteria must be established for the new reforms in the financing system and Export Credit Agencies, subsidies, IFIs, and private financial flows should all be subjected to these criteria
- Eradication of external debt is a precondition for real sustainability.
- The commitment to 0.7% GNP for ODA should be met. Furthermore, ODA should be structured to ensure that it reaches the intended recipients—communities—as they are the ones that actually make sustainable development happen. It should not directly or indirectly contribute to unsustainable activities, including militarism.

Given the increasing importance of FDI, trade and investment regimes should foster and expressly support sustainable development.

Corporate Accountability should be improved, by better reporting on sustainable development using such initiatives as the Global Reporting Initiative and, where appropriate, governmental regulation.

### **Governance for Sustainable Development, including capacity building**

Peace, stability, solidarity, mutual respect, and dialogue among civilizations are all crucial for sustainability. Power imbalances there will be but should be dealt with through dialogue.

When making recommendations, we should endeavour to come up with solutions for a future for all of us, and not merely highlight our differences or exacerbate the North-South divide.

There should be mechanisms for implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, through legally-binding instruments like the Aarhus Convention, and other regional initiatives. In particular, there is a need for proactive awareness-raising with regard to sustainable development. There is very little knowledge on what conventions are out there and what rights and duties they propose. Substantial financial support is needed for a comprehensive strategy on education and information for sustainable development.

In addition, it should be ensured that unrepresented peoples have a voice in sustainable development decision-making at all levels.

Governments should facilitate the establishment of National and Local Councils for Sustainable Development, and similar bodies, with equitable and meaningful participation of all sectors of society.

There should be a greater demonstration of governance and genuine commitment to sustainability in everyday operations. There is practically no implementation due to the enormous problems around sustainable development governance nationally and internationally. Integration of policies and practices to implement sustainable development should also mean consolidation to ensure that resources are optimally used. Mainstreaming of sustainable development should be THE theme emerging from Johannesburg.

Due account should be taken of the particular environmental and social vulnerabilities of SIDS, and other regions and states.

The commitments of Rio should be translated into national and international legally binding instruments. There is a need for global legislation, or a declaration of principles and a mechanism for enforcement. Important MEAs (e.g., the Kyoto and Cartagena Protocols and the POPs and PIC conventions) should enter into force, be effectively implemented and serve as a litmus test for the WSSD.

In conclusion, the WSSD must succeed. A failure of this Summit will seriously undermine sustainable development governance, the UN system and multilateralism in general. Failure of the Summit will also cause a serious backlash in financial support for environmental and social policies. We therefore call upon all Heads of States to attend the Summit and demonstrate their commitment to sustainable development.

Distinguished delegates, we look to you, indeed the whole world looks to you to alleviate these misgivings, to express resolve, and take decisive action.