

THE SUCCESSES AND FAILURES OF JOHANNESBURG: A STORY OF MANY SUMMITS

A Report on the World Summit on Sustainable Development for Donors and Civil Society Organizations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Johannesburg, in late August and early September 2002, was a city of many summits: the official intergovernmental meeting in Sandton; the Global People's Forum in NASREC Fairgrounds; the People's Earth Summit; the gathering of landless people from Africa and the world; the forum on environmental justice; the teach-in by the International Forum on Globalization; the many meetings at the IUCN Environment Centre; the summits of the legislators and the local governments; the Implementation Conference of stakeholders; the international business days convened by industry; and the Ubuntu Village exposition center and the Water Dome exhibition center, as well as other exhibitions. Adding to those summits held in Johannesburg were a few others held throughout South Africa: the Kimberley Summit of Indigenous Peoples; the Capetown conference on responsible tourism; and, the Children's Earth Summit in Soweto. All of these were "summits" in their own right and can be told as separate narratives. Understanding what took place in Johannesburg during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, its success and its failure, requires an appreciation of each of these summits and how they come together into one story. This story is both inspiring and disturbing, for it tells much of where the world and its peoples are in implementing sustainable development and exposes what remains to be done. This report is an attempt to tell this greater story.

This is a preliminary report on the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August – 4 September 2002. The report is intended for donor agencies and civil society organizations with the objective of providing a critical perspective on the WSSD process. Throughout this process, WRI, with support from the Ford Foundation, provided periodic updates on WSSD processes with the specific intention of enhancing the impact of civil society organizations, particularly those representing poor and excluded constituencies worldwide. This report, the final update of a series, summarizes the outcomes of Johannesburg and highlights both its successes and failures while emphasizing the impact (limited as it may have been) of civil society engagement on the official process.

A full assessment of the WSSD and its implications for the future, particularly for poor communities and their assets, will be released by WRI in December 2002. The assessment will evaluate the substantive outcomes of WSSD, examine the impact of civil society engagement in the process, and identify lessons learned so future global processes may be better managed and more productive.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE REPORT

- 1. Introduction:** There were many summits in Johannesburg, each contributing to a larger story: of a world community struggling to find common solutions to the challenges of poverty and environmental degradation; of divided governments, unable to agree on the fundamental changes necessary to move the world towards sustainable development; and of civil society holding governments accountable for the consequences of environment and development decisions and for implementing sustainable development on the ground.
- 2. The Failure of Johannesburg:** Many were disappointed with the official outcomes of the WSSD, believing that the world has not moved forward in any meaningful way since the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. In Johannesburg, governments looked at the state of the world today, recognized the immense development and environment problems, acknowledged the need to respond in a greater way to these challenges, but concluded weakly by ratifying existing efforts and approaches which have been found wanting.
- 3. Gaps in the Outcomes:** The absence of new commitments and innovative thinking was evident: ambitious and strong sustainable development targets with firm timeframes could have made a major difference but governments, for the most part, could not agree on new goals other than those already incorporated into the UN Millennium Declaration Goals and other prior agreements. Nor did governments provide direction or guidance from a sustainable development perspective on how the opportunities offered by globalization could be maximized or how its challenges could be overcome. In this sense, Johannesburg was a missed opportunity for governments: to give a sustainable development dimension to globalization and, to reform the global environmental governance system in order to establish a rigorous and meaningful accountability for the decisions of the WSSD.
- 4. Successes in the WSSD:** The successes of the official summit include decisions on a sanitation target, the recognition of the rights and roles of communities in natural resources management, the promotion of greater corporate responsibility and accountability, the reaffirmation of the principle of access, the incorporation of ethics into the implementation of Agenda 21, the acceptance of the need to delink economic growth from environmental degradation, and the launching of key initiatives and partnerships on sustainable development.
- 5. The Other Summits of Johannesburg:** The larger success of Johannesburg is in the many "summits" that took place in South Africa during and before the official meeting. Understanding the accomplishments of the WSSD requires an appreciation of these summits and how they came together to implement sustainable development.

6. **Civil society in the WSSD:** Johannesburg saw a face of global civil society that was neither singular nor homogenous, and to no one's surprise, only rarely did it speak in one voice. This diversity of voices and faces should be celebrated even as it poses the difficult challenge of finding common ground and forging common strategies. This lack of coherence was an important factor in limiting civil society engagement in the WSSD. Physical and formal access issues also limited civil society, isolating them not only from governments but from each other. It was only in the last days of the WSSD when many organizations found a common voice in the form of a march and a joint declaration.
7. **Successes in Civil Society Engagement:** The successes in civil society engagement in the WSSD included gains in the official meeting which are directly linked to the efforts of civil society organizations and caucuses. Important developments within civil society that were manifested at the summit also deserve attention because of their implications for the future.
8. **Conclusion:** The story of Johannesburg is both inspiring and disturbing. Concrete gains were achieved in the official meeting. The diversity of voices and faces in the non-official summits should be celebrated. However, the divisions among governments, within civil society, and between governments and civil society will continue to be an obstacle for progress in dealing with development and environment concerns. How to overcome this and find a path to common solutions so that diversity is considered a strength, not a weakness, is a challenge for those who believe sustainable development is essential for people, planet and prosperity.
9. **Annexes:** The highlights of the Political Declaration and a summary of the Plan of Implementation are annexed to this report.

INTRODUCTION

During the period of 26 August – 4 September 2002, 82 Heads of State and Government, thirty Vice-Presidents and Deputy Prime Ministers, 74 ministers, royalty and other senior officials came together with thousands of official representatives (from diverse governments agencies and intergovernmental organizations) and observers from civil society, academia, the scientific community, local communities, and the private sector at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).¹ In addition to the more than 20,000 participants who registered for the official summit, thousands of others from all over the world participated in many parallel events organized in the course of the ten days that the WSSD convened as well as during the week that preceded the official meeting.²

Together, the many summits of Johannesburg tell different narratives: of a world community, confronted with immense poverty and serious environmental problems, struggling to find common solutions to move forward in pursuing sustainable development; of governments, divided by competing ideologies and visions of development and globalization and paralyzed by lack of political will, unable to agree on the fundamental changes necessary to move the world in the right direction; and of civil society, including indigenous peoples and local communities, asserting their right to participate meaningfully in environment and development decisions, increasingly holding governments accountable for the domestic and global consequences of such decisions, and implementing, with or without official sanction, sustainable development on the ground.

THE SUMMIT AT SANDTON: ASSESSING ITS OUTCOMES

The activities of the official summit included seven thematic Partnership Plenaries, statements by non-State entities, four high-level Round Tables, addresses by Heads of State and Government and other senior officials, and a multi-stakeholder event. Running in parallel with these activities was the process of negotiating and adopting main documents: the Plan of Implementation and the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development³. Lower-level officials made little progress on the most contentious issues during their negotiating period. This lack of headway placed the responsibility of successfully negotiating contentious sections of the Implementation Plan up to those involved in the high-level segment, held over the last three days of the Summit. In the end, governments succeeded in adopting the two main documents, which together, are intended to frame the official approach to sustainable development in the foreseeable future.

¹ For a detailed summary of the official negotiations in Johannesburg, see International Institute for Sustainable Development. *Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, Friday, 6 September 2002, <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/2002/wssd/> Vol. 22 No. 51.

² For a list and description of parallel events, see <http://www.joburgsummit2002.com/> and http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/basic_info/parallel_events.html

³ These documents can be downloaded from the official web site of the WSSD - www.johannesburgsummit.org/

The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development⁴, approved by governments on the last day of the official meeting, is based on the Plan of Implementation. Unlike the latter, the political declaration did not undergo intensive negotiations. In fact, the first version of the declaration appeared quite late in the process. And although consultations were conducted, there was very little time for substantive negotiations on the declaration.

The Plan of Implementation, negotiated over a period of 8 months and eventually adopted by governments has 11 principal sections⁵. These are:

- n *Introduction*
- n *Poverty eradication*
- n *Changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production*
- n *Protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development*
- n *Sustainable development in a globalizing world*
- n *Health and sustainable development*
- n *Sustainable development of small island developing states*
- n *Sustainable development for Africa*
- n *Other regional initiatives*
- n *Means of implementation*
- n *Institutional framework for sustainable development*

Annex I and Annex II of this report describe highlights of the political declaration and summarize the principal sections of the Plan of Implementation, respectively.

THE FAILURES OF WSSD

While many participants and observers have concluded that the outcomes of the WSSD are disappointing, the official outcomes of Johannesburg are certainly not a retreat from the gains achieved at the Earth Summit of 1992. Fears that the principle on common but differentiated responsibilities⁶ and the precautionary approach⁷ would be rolled back were not realized. While these principles are reaffirmed in the Johannesburg outcomes, they have not however been advanced in any meaningful way. This stagnation is the heart of the problem. Governments in Johannesburg looked at the world, recognized that we are faced with immense development and environment problems, acknowledged that we need to do more to respond to these challenges, but then concluded with a weak outcome by ratifying existing efforts and approaches which have been found wanting.

⁴ See www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/1009wssd_pol_declaration.doc

⁵ Source: www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/2009_plan_final.doc

⁶ Common but differentiated responsibilities” refers to the notion that developed countries, because of their historical role in causing global environmental problems and because of their access to financial and technological resources, should take the lead in responding to environmental concerns.

⁷ The precautionary approach states that where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing action.

The absence of new commitments and innovative thinking, particularly on global environmental issues and how they threaten development in all countries, is probably the most significant weakness of the Plan of Implementation. Stagnation is exemplified by the inadequate approach that governments took with respect to time bound targets and the challenges of globalization. It is also illustrated by their failure to break new ground in the two most important sections of the Plan – the sections on “Means of Implementation” and “Institutional Mechanisms.”

Inadequate Progress of Time-bound Targets

The Plan of Implementation is a political document and does not commit governments, in a legally binding way, to achieve its goals. Like Agenda 21, however, the Plan of Implementation is designed to guide development, financing, and investment decisions by governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders. In this sense, more ambitious and stronger sustainable development targets with firm time lines could have made a major difference in the years to come. However, the WSSD clearly failed to provide such targets.

While the focus on time-bound targets was refreshing, most of them (the UN Millennium Development Goals) have already been previously agreed upon in 2000 at the Millennium meeting of heads of state at the U.N. in New York, with the only new important targets being the areas of sanitation, fisheries and biodiversity. The failure to reach agreement on time-bound targets for increasing the contribution of renewable energy to the global energy mix was especially frustrating to many governments and other stakeholders. If incorporated, such targets would have been the only place in the Plan of Implementation where climate change was addressed in a meaningful way.

While the sanitation target of halving by 2015 the proportion of people who lack access to clean water or proper sanitation is an important achievement (discussed below), many question the meaningfulness of a 2010 target to achieve a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss in absence of accurate estimates of the existing rate of global loss. The fisheries target to maintain or restore stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield not later than 2015 is also controversial because it is based on the contentious concept of maximum sustainable yield.

Missed Opportunities

The Plan of Implementation has also been criticized for its failure to address in a meaningful way the new (post-Rio) challenges to sustainable development. The Plan gave unqualified ratification to the Monterrey agreements on financing and development and to the Doha processes for a new round of trade negotiations. With that ratification, the WSSD failed to give any signal on how development cooperation and expanding international trade could be directed to serve the goals of sustainable development.

While the Plan recognizes both the opportunities and challenges posed by globalization to sustainable development, governments did not provide any direction or guidance from a sustainable development perspective on how these opportunities could be maximized and how the challenges could be overcome. In this sense, Johannesburg was a missed opportunity for governments to give a face of sustainable development to globalization.

The inability of governments to agree on how to reform the existing global environmental governance system makes it unlikely that accountability for the decisions made in Johannesburg will be rigorous and meaningful. Indeed, the biggest gaps in and the weakest part of the Plan of Implementation can be found in its most important sections: means of implementation (the financial resources and mechanisms needed to achieve the identified goals of the plan) and institutional mechanisms (the monitoring and accountability system required). By not going beyond the current framework in these two areas crucial for monitoring and implementing commitments made, a recurrence of the failures of Rio appears inevitable.

The Intergovernmental Politics of Johannesburg

The politics of Johannesburg were complex. On one hand, the traditional divisions between North and South on key issues such as trade and development finance were evident. But on many other concerns, the North-South paradigm was not useful in understanding the dynamics among governments. The negotiations on a renewable energy target featured an alliance among the Latin Americans, the small island states, and the Europeans (particularly Norway) “against” a coalition involving oil producing states, the United States and a few other countries. The negotiations on biological diversity were not principally a North-South debate but for the first time highlighted the influence of a coalition of “mega-diverse” (the countries with the highest levels of biological diversity) developing countries.

What was also striking in Johannesburg and the overall WSSD process was the absence of leadership from developed countries in dealing with environmental issues, especially those which are global in nature such as climate change. While this had a positive consequence to the agenda of developing countries who wanted development issues to be the priority in the WSSD, this lack of leadership resulted in very weak objectives and actions on the major environmental issues. The United States, for example, was active and engaged in the process contrary to the expectations of many. However, its interventions were principally defensive - characterized by the avoidance of new multilateral commitments and in some cases hostility to proposals on global environmental problems. The role of the European Union was also a disappointment to many. Indeed, one of the low points of the official meeting was when its negotiators temporarily “withdrew” from the negotiating process on the excuse that all the contentious issues had to be elevated to the ministerial level. This was a tactic that many countries and NGOs criticized as unilateralist and unconstructive.

It was countries such as Norway (pushing for strong commitments on climate change, on development assistance, and many other issues), Brazil (which led the coalition for a renewable energy target) and Ethiopia (which played a crucial role in preventing the weakening of multilateral environmental agreements when it was proposed that such agreements be subordinated to the World Trade Organization) which provided leadership on environmental issues. While leadership from new quarters was a welcome development (especially the respective roles of the developing countries mentioned), it is difficult to see how progress could be made on many environmental issues without the leadership of the richest and most powerful countries of the world. In this context, it does not come as a surprise that the Plan of Implementation is extremely weak on dealing with environmental challenges.

SUCCESSSES IN THE WSSD

There were also successes in the official summit which must be acknowledged and celebrated. These include decisions: adopting a sanitation target; recognizing the rights and roles of communities; promoting corporate responsibility and accountability; reaffirming the principle of access to information, participation and justice; incorporating ethics into the implementation of Agenda 21; acceptance of the need to delink economic growth from environmental degradation; and the launching of some key initiatives and partnerships on sustainable development.

The Sanitation Target

The most important of the successes in WSSD (because it is the most concrete) is the adoption of the new target on basic sanitation. If indeed the proportion of people now without access to basic sanitation is halved by 2015, this would not be a trivial outcome. Achieving this target would make a difference in the lives of millions of the world's poor, especially those of children suffering or dying from diseases resulting from lack of basic sanitation services.

What is sad, however, about the negotiations leading to this target, acknowledged by many as clearly achievable, is that it was opposed throughout most of the negotiations by a few powerful countries. This gave the impression that the health of millions was being held hostage to gain a political advantage over another set of negotiations, in particular, that of the negotiations on targets for renewable energy. While there is no evidence that there was a trade-off between these issues, the perception that such a trade-off was being considered became a source of cynicism and tainted politically the achievement of the sanitation target.

The Rights of Communities

The unequivocal recognition of community-based natural resource management, including the reaffirmation of the vital role of indigenous peoples in sustainable development, throughout the Plan of Implementation is also an important success in the WSSD. What is even more remarkable is that this recognition, actively promoted by many stakeholders, was agreed upon as early as Bali and without major dissent from governments. This includes:

- n The recognition and support for community-based forest management systems to ensure their full and effective participation in sustainable forest management;
- n The commitment to develop policies and ways and means to improve access by indigenous people and their communities to economic activities and the recognition that traditional and direct dependence on renewable resources and ecosystems continues to be essential to the cultural, economic and physical well-being of indigenous people and their communities;
- n The commitment to provide access to agricultural resources for people living in poverty, especially women and indigenous communities, and promote land tenure arrangements that recognize and protect indigenous and common property resource management systems;
- n The commitment to promote rural community participation in developing and utilizing renewable energy technologies to meet their daily energy needs;
- n The decision to encourage the dissemination and use of traditional and indigenous knowledge for the mitigation of the impact of disasters and to promote community-based disaster management;
- n The promotion of initiatives which promote community-based sustainable use of biodiversity;
- n The acknowledgement that the participation of stakeholders, including local and indigenous communities, is important for mining to be consistent with sustainable development;
- n The promotion of community-based initiatives on sustainable tourism;
- n The recognition of the necessity of programs for capacity building and support for local and community level programs, among others, that focus on meeting the challenges of globalization;
- n The promotion of the preservation, development and use of effective traditional medicine knowledge and practices and recognizing indigenous and local communities as custodians of traditional knowledge and practice;
- n The promotion of the full participation and involvement of mountain communities in decisions that affect them; and,
- n The recognition of the rights of local and indigenous communities who are holders of traditional knowledge, innovations and practices.

Corporate Responsibility and Accountability

The decision on corporate responsibility and accountability is an important achievement. While falling short of the demand by many NGOs for governments to negotiate a binding convention on corporate accountability and liability, the decision to promote corporate responsibility and accountability, based on the Rio principles, through, among other things, “the full development and effective implementation of intergovernmental agreements and measures,” is an important step forward.

This decision may actually result in future intergovernmental processes that deal explicitly with this important issue and could actually result in a meaningful international agreement. The small opening provided by the WSSD is so important that it motivated the United States delegation to provide an interpretation, not shared by many governments, that “intergovernmental agreements” refer only to existing agreements and not to the development of new instruments.

Access to Information, Participation and Justice

The Plan of Implementation commits governments to ensure access, at the national level, to environmental information and judicial and administrative proceedings in environmental matters, as well as public participation in decision-making. This reaffirmation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration is an important success achieved in the WSSD especially if the resources to implement this commitment are made available.

Related to this is the wide acceptance of and support for the Partnership on Principle 10, an initiative led and promoted by a coalition of civil society organizations from all over the world, by governments and other stakeholders.

The Importance of Ethics

Another success in the WSSD is the acknowledgement of the importance of ethics for sustainable development. In the Plan of Implementation, governments emphasized the need to consider ethics in the implementation of Agenda 21. This is the first time an explicit reference to ethics is made in any official U.N. environment and/or development document and thus breaks new ground. Although neither the Plan of Implementation nor the Political Declaration makes a reference to the Earth Charter, the incorporation of ethics into the sustainable development agenda provides an opening to those who believe that development and environment issues cannot be dealt with adequately unless governments, societies and communities acknowledge the critical role of ethical norms in making policy decisions.

Delinking Economic Growth and Environmental Degradation

The Plan of Implementation encourages and promotes the development of a 10-year framework of programs in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production to promote social and economic development within the carrying capacity of ecosystems. These initiatives are supposed to address and delink economic growth and environmental degradation through improving efficiency and sustainability in the use of resources and production processes, and reducing resource degradation, pollution and waste. This decision can, at least potentially, have enormous consequences in changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production if in fact the financial and technical resources to make this happen become available. Although the agreed text, with all the qualifications and reservations that governments made, is much weaker than what many stakeholders were promoting, the very acceptance of the idea that economic growth and environmental degradation needs to be delinked is an important step forward.

Partnerships and Initiatives

There were two types of commitments encouraged during the WSSD. Type I commitments refer to political or legal agreements among all governments, negotiated through the intergovernmental process, and consolidated in the Plan of Implementation. Type II commitments, on the other hand, are voluntary partnerships to implement sustainable development among government, development or environmental organizations, industry and other actors. During the preparatory process for the WSSD, the politics of so-called Type II partnerships became one of the crucial issues for governments and other stakeholders alike. Concerns about partnerships focused on four themes:

- n Partnerships could be used as a substitute for intergovernmental commitments, thus allowing governments to abdicate responsibilities that are properly a function of the state and threatening multilateral negotiations and cooperation.
- n Some NGOs have expressed concern that corporations, in joining the Type II Partnerships, could use them to bring inappropriate corporate money and influence into the United Nations, and develop partnerships that would serve as “greenwash” or instruments to promote privatization.
- n The governance of the partnerships, including accountability mechanisms and provisions for transparency and monitoring, was unclear. NGOs and governments alike demanded that for partnerships to be recognized, they must include external monitoring, transparency, and accountability mechanisms.
- n Partnerships could be financed through existing Official Development Assistance flow, with no additional funding provided, and thus could actually divert existing and limited resources from those in need of them.

In Johannesburg, very little high-level attention was focused on partnerships for a number of reasons. First, governments and other stakeholders alike clearly realized that the

stakes were much higher in the political negotiations and focusing attention on partnerships was an unwanted distraction. Second, despite the efforts to clarify guidelines and principles for partnerships, it appears that no criteria or decision making process on what should constitute a partnership was adopted by the United Nations. This led to the situation where almost any activity, project, program or initiative could proclaim itself a partnership for purposes of the WSSD. Third, most of the partnerships announced did not attract controversy because they were either intergovernmental in nature or promoted by academic/scientific organizations or civil society organizations, with few partnerships actively participated in by corporations.

Although the concept of Type II partnerships was controversial and, at least for the time being, has not acquired any legal or political status, there were important new initiatives and partnerships launched in Johannesburg.⁸ The initiatives, among others, on sustainable agriculture (i.e. Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Partnership Initiative, Promoting Capacity Building for Sustainable Agriculture), water and sanitation (i.e., Partners for Water and Sanitation, Pacific Umbrella Initiative: Pacific Strategies for Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, and Regional Consultation on Sustainable Water Management), information for decision-making (i.e., Partnership for Principle 10), and a political partnership on renewable energy (announced by a coalition of regional groups and countries promoting a global renewable energy target, supported by a commitment of up to US\$700 million by the European Union) are particularly significant.

OUTSIDE OF SANDTON: THE OTHER “SUMMITS”

The larger success of Johannesburg is, however, not in the official story. The government meeting in Sandton was only one of the many “summits” that took place not only in Johannesburg but elsewhere in South Africa during and before the official meeting. Some of these “summits” were:

The Global People’s Forum (GPF) at the NASREC Fairgrounds was attended by thousands of representatives of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) from all over the world, a majority of which were from the Global South. These GPF convened many commissions on important themes related to sustainable development and adopted its own declaration and plan of action⁹;

The People’s Earth Summit (PES) brought together environmental and globalization activists and local communities worldwide and was uncompromising in holding governments and corporations accountable for poverty and environmental degradation.¹⁰ The PES ultimately withdrew its consent from governments attending the WSSD;

⁸ See http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/2908_partnershipsummary.pdf for a complete list of partnerships.

⁹ See <http://www.worldsummit.org.za/>, the official website of the Global People’s Forum.

¹⁰ See <http://www.peopleearthsummit.net/celebration/joberg.asp>, the website of the People’s Earth Summit.

The Summit of Indigenous Peoples in Kimberley reaffirmed their mutual solidarity in their struggle for social and environmental justice and asserted their rights to self-determination. The Indigenous Peoples Summit also asserted their rights to own, control, and manage their ancestral lands, territories, waters, and other resources¹¹;

The Capetown Conference on Responsible Tourism brought together tourism stakeholders from all over the world to examine the challenges of sustainable tourism development and the responsibilities for achieving this at the local level;

The Gathering of Landless People from South Africa, Africa, and other regions of the world, in a run-down amusement park near Soweto, spent the week attending workshops on land reform, holding rallies, and preparing for a march to Sandton during the final days of the WSSD;¹²

The Forum on Environmental Justice emphasized the “forgotten” agenda of the official summit – environmental racism and its costs and consequences. The Environmental Justice Forum challenged governments and corporations to halt destructive and unsustainable practices that disproportionately harm people of color, indigenous peoples and poor communities.¹³

The International Forum on Globalization¹⁴ and its teach-in were conducted by an alliance of activists, scholars, economists, researchers and writers. The Globalization Forum sought to bring a critical perspective of the WSSD process by highlighting what it considered to be the number one threat to the survival of the natural world - economic globalization;

The Children’s Earth Summit in Soweto brought more than 100 children from different countries together to demand that the world give them a future;¹⁵

The many meetings at the IUCN Environment Centre in NEDCOR Bank focused on the future and on partnerships. The IUCN Centre provided space for stakeholders (over 20,000 of them visited the centre during the WSSD) to convene and dialogue with each other so that the stakeholders might seek ways to move forward on sustainable development;¹⁶

The Summits of Legislators¹⁷ and **Local Governments**¹⁸ convened legislators and local government officials, respectively, to explore common approaches and solutions to sustainable development;

¹¹ See <http://www.tebtebba.org/>

¹² See <http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/wssd/020830s.htm>

¹³ See <http://www.ejrc.cau.edu/envreparationWSSD.html> for an account of the forum.

¹⁴ See <http://www.ifg.org/>

¹⁵ See <http://www.josummit.com/news/fullstory.sps?iNewsID=21025&itype=1687&iCategoryID=350>

¹⁶ See www.iucn.org/wssd/

¹⁷ See <http://www.globeinternational.org/wssd.html>

¹⁸ See www.iclei.org/lgs/

The International Business Days¹⁹ were held in the IUCN center and at other venues during the WSSD. The Business Days brought together business leaders from the world to explore the contributions of the private sector to sustainable development, and to conduct dialogues with stakeholders;

The Implementation Conference²⁰ was convened to inspire stakeholders to create collectively clear, measurable, and on-going action to implement sustainable development.

The Ubuntu Village Exposition Centre²¹, **the Water Dome Exhibition Centre**²², and other exhibitions displayed the latest in technology, innovations, and ideas on sustainable development. The displays were produced and staffed by diverse countries, groups and organizations worldwide.

All these were “summits” in their own right and understanding what took place in Johannesburg during the WSSD, its success and failure, requires an appreciation of these many summits. These were not meaningless exercises organized for the benefit of those who were not official participants in the WSSD. They were convened with specific objectives with the intent of influencing the official process or to send the message that, with or without governments, the work on sustainable development must be continued. In many ways, as reflected by the Global People’s Forum and the Kimberley Summit of Indigenous Peoples (described below), the outputs of these other summits mirrored the outcomes of the official meeting.

Global People’s Forum

The Global People’s Forum (GBF)²³ was attended by thousands of representatives of nongovernmental organizations (approximately 20,000 registered in the Forum) from all over the world, the majority of whom were from the Global South. The GBF convened many commissions on important themes related to sustainable development, the reports of which became the basis for a civil society declaration and a programme of action: *The Global People’s Forum: Civil Society Declaration: A Sustainable World Is Possible* and *Global People’s Forum Programme of Action: A Sustainable World Is Possible*.²⁴

The declaration calls on all governments to fulfill commitments made in Rio and Johannesburg. It asks for civil society participation in implementing these commitments. It reaffirms the equality of all people, affirms the rights of indigenous peoples, and calls for the rights of refugees to be acknowledged. It advocates fair trade, redistribution and reparations, corporate accountability, debt eradication, anti-privatization, transparency,

¹⁹ See <http://www.basd-action.net/activities/business.shtml> and <http://biodiversityeconomics.org/business/020831-00.htm>

²⁰ See <http://www.earthsummit2002.org/ic/>

²¹ See <http://www.joburgsummit2002.com/activities/ubuntu.sps?itype=1690&id=3537>

²² <http://www.waterdome.net/>

²³ See <http://www.worldsummit.org.za/>, the official website of the Global People’s Forum.

²⁴ See <http://www.johannesburgplus10.org> for the texts of these documents.

right to self-determination and respect for human rights. The declaration also asserts that the principles of human and environmental security and justice should be the root of all political, economic and environmental agreements and interventions.

On environmental issues, the declaration asserts that communities and peoples must have control over biological resources as well as their rights to direct all development, including in agriculture and aquaculture, towards models that are ecologically and socio-culturally sensitive, and which conserve or enhance biodiversity and biodiversity-based livelihoods. It advocates the recognition of indigenous and traditional knowledge, the ratification of the Kyoto Protocol, the rejection of genetic engineering, the promotion of renewable energy, and the phasing out of nuclear reactors.

The goal of the Programme of Action, adopted at the GPF, is to build a sustainable world, based on principles of human rights, economic justice and environmental protection. It includes demands and recommendations on: land issues; agriculture; biodiversity; conflict and peace; corporate accountability; debt eradication and reparations; climate change and energy; financing development; forests; global governance and corruption; jobs, living wages and employment; mining, human security and environmental justice; marine, inland fisheries and coasts; participation and enforcement; poverty, racism and sustainable development; sustainable consumption and production; water; sustainable development and the millennium development goals; restoring self-governance in the age of globalization; social protection and household food security; trade and sustainable development; health; environmental health; and, science and education & capacity building.

The Kimberley Summit of Indigenous People's

Indigenous peoples met for their own summit in the Khoi-San Territory, Kimberley, South Africa, from 20-23 August 2002. The outcome of this meeting was also a political declaration and an accompanying plan of action.²⁵ In the Kimberley Declaration, indigenous peoples reaffirm their relationship to Mother Earth and a responsibility to coming generations to uphold peace, equity and justice. The declaration notes that the commitments which were made to indigenous peoples in Agenda 21 have not been implemented due to the lack of political will.

In their declaration, indigenous peoples:

- n Reaffirm their rights to self-determination and to own, control and manage their ancestral lands and territories, waters and other resources;
- n Demand recognition of their right to determine and establish priorities and strategies for their self-development and for the use of their lands, territories and other resources;
- n Assert that free, prior and informed consent must be the principle of approving or rejecting any project or activity affecting their lands, territories and other resources;

²⁵ See <http://www.tebtebba.org> for the texts of these documents.

- n Demand that their traditional knowledge systems must be respected, promoted and protected and their collective intellectual property rights be guaranteed and ensured;
- n Note that economic globalization constitutes one of the main obstacles for the recognition of their rights;
- n Condemn unsustainable extraction, harvesting, production and consumption patterns resulting in climate change, widespread pollution and environmental destruction, evicting them from their lands and creating immense levels of poverty and disease; and,
- n Call for partnerships established according to the following principles: their rights to the land and to self-determination; honesty, transparency and good faith; free, prior and informed consent; respect and recognition of their cultures, languages and spiritual beliefs.

Lessons from the Other Summits

The other summits of Johannesburg illustrate how far the world has come to meeting the challenges of sustainable development. It is clear for example that many stakeholder groups are far ahead of governments in building a sustainable development movement on-the-ground. In many places in the world, sustainable development is clearly not seen as involving primarily environmental or even development dilemmas but one that, at its core, is a human rights and ethical challenge – the demand to ensure that people and planet deserve better than what we have so far done to each other and to our environment. Hence, social justice, equality and equity were a common refrain in many of these other summits.

What was also striking about the other summits of Johannesburg was the diversity of voices and interests that seek to be heard on sustainable development issues. Unlike Rio where civil society engagement was led principally by the global environment movement, Johannesburg saw a different face to global civil society: one that was not singular nor homogenous and certainly not a synergy of shared experiences. The environmental NGOs, development groups, workers, indigenous peoples, farmers, businessmen, women, religious and spiritual leaders, scientists, policy researchers, local officials, youth and children: all these and many others came to Johannesburg from the cities and villages and from the mountains and islands of all the continents of the world - and to no one's surprise, only rarely did they speak in one voice.

The diversity of voices and faces of those who were in the many summits of Johannesburg should be celebrated.²⁶ It represents the success of the idea of sustainable development: that it has spread throughout the world and that all peoples and stakeholders recognize it as an imperative. At the same time, however, this diversity poses a difficult challenge: that of finding common ground and therefore forging common strategies and positions on sustainable development: How do you find unity in

²⁶ For a sampling of civil society positions on key issues during the WSSD, see the Eco-Equity bulletins released during the summit at www.greenpeace.org or www.rio10.dk

this diversity? Can civil society ever speak in one voice again? What is needed to make this possible?

CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN THE WSSD

This lack of coherence and unity among civil society organizations was an important factor that explains why the impact of civil society engagement in the WSSD was limited. Other factors also contributed to hindering this effort. Agenda 21, adopted in Rio de Janeiro, identified nine “major groups” around which particular attention was needed. This concept is clearly no longer adequate. It is considered by many to be non-inclusive and to foster divisions among civil society interests rather than to unifying them. Above all, civil society engagement in the WSSD was constrained by access issues. For security and logistical reasons, physical and formal access by civil society to the official meeting was difficult, if not impossible on some days. Together with the geographical characteristics of Johannesburg, a sprawling metropolis, this lack of access had the effect of isolating civil society representatives not only from governments but from each other.

Another result of the isolation of civil society was its failure to project to the world media, which had converged in Johannesburg in droves, the energy and creativity that was in abundance in the other summits. This failure contributed to media coverage that focused on the divisions between governments and the compromises they eventually made rather than on the sustainable development movement that is emerging from the ground.

It must be said though, despite the disunity of civil society and the access constraints in Johannesburg, that there were successes in civil society engagement in the WSSD. Indeed, many of the successes in the official meeting can be directly linked to the efforts of civil society organizations and caucuses. Some examples are:

- n The achievement of the sanitation target would not have been possible if not for the work by a broad alliance of scientists and advocates from the water and sanitation community;
- n The success in having community based natural resources management recognized, especially in the area of forestry, was the result of aggressive lobbying by the Community-Based Forestry Caucus in Bali;
- n The recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights (including having the term “Indigenous Peoples”, emphasis on *Peoples*, accepted in the political declaration) would not have been gained without the hard work by their caucus;
- n The acceptance of the need to provide access to information, public participation and justice is partly a result of the efforts by the Access Initiative, a coalition of civil society organizations; and,

- n The success in putting corporate responsibility and accountability in the international agenda would not have been possible without the concerted campaigns of Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace and other organizations.

Important lessons for engagement in future global processes can be learned from these limited successes. Why did some civil society caucuses or groups have more impact on the official outcomes than others? What were the strategies and conditions which made it possible for civil society to achieve these gains? Can these successes be replicated in other forums and processes?

There were also important developments within civil society in Johannesburg which deserve attention because of their implications for the future. For example, there was in Johannesburg (as there was in Bali), the presence and active participation of a significant number of independent individuals and nongovernmental organizations from countries such as China and Vietnam and other places which usually are represented only by their governments in international processes. The prominence of the caucus of Arab NGOs – they too came out with their own declaration²⁷ that called for actions by both the international community and Arab governments and were instrumental in providing avenues for dialogue with their governments - was particularly refreshing. If such a caucus can become active, for example, in the climate change arena, it could have significant impact in the dynamics of that process. The extensive representation of NGOs in the official delegations of some countries – as in the case of Brazil, Indonesia and the Philippines – was also an important development because, if this becomes a trend, it could have significant consequences for future processes.

It was in the last days of the WSSD when many civil society organizations found a common voice in the form of a march led by the landless from Alexandria to Sandton and in a joint declaration that many (but not all) NGOs signed on to. In this joint declaration, many NGOs dissociated themselves from the overall outcomes of the WSSD. They condemned governments for their “tragic unwillingness to translate the Rio principles into concrete action or show any determination to commit themselves to the objectives of Agenda 21” and for showing “an irresponsible subservience to corporate-led globalization” and making “attempts to roll back the commitments they reached in Rio”. Finally, civil society organizations reaffirmed that “another world is possible, and we shall make it happen!”

While this civil society declaration is a significant achievement, it is fair to ask why it happened only in the last few days of the WSSD and why a more unified engagement with governments early on in the process, when there was a greater opportunity to influence the official results, was not possible. What makes it even more disappointing is the fact that, at the formal level (through the multi stakeholder processes instituted), the WSSD was supposed to have been designed to be the most participatory of all global intergovernmental processes. Although key persons in the WSSD secretariat as well as designated NGO networks, such as the Sustainable Development Issues Network (SDIN), exerted tremendous efforts to make the multi stakeholder processes succeed, the processes failed to be both a unifying as well as an effective vehicle for civil society

²⁷ See www.johannesburgplus10.org for the text of this document.

engagement. All of civil society has a stake in looking at what happened in the WSSD, determining the obstacles and constraints to effective multi stakeholder involvement, and identifying the needed solutions.

CONCLUSION

Johannesburg is a story of many summits. It is an inspiring story. Despite low expectations, concrete gains were achieved in the official meeting, successes that could be directly linked to efforts by stakeholder groups. The diversity of voices and faces in the other summits is significant and should be celebrated. But the story of Johannesburg is also disturbing. The divisions among governments, within civil society, and between governments and civil society, will continue to be an obstacle for progress in dealing with development and environment concerns perhaps for years or even decades to come. How to overcome this and find a path to common solutions so that diversity becomes a strength and not a weakness is a challenge for all those who believe that sustainable development is essential for people, planet and prosperity.

ANNEX I

THE JOHANNESBURG DECLARATION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT *HIGHLIGHTS*

- n Governments reaffirm their commitment to sustainable development and commit themselves to build a humane, equitable and caring global society cognizant of the need for human dignity of all. They also reaffirm their commitment to implement the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21.
- n Poverty eradication, changing consumption and production patterns, and the protection and management of the natural resource base for economic and social development are acknowledged as overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for sustainable development.
- n The divisions between rich and poor and increasing gap between the developed and developing worlds is recognized as a major threat to global prosperity, security and stability.
- n Problems related to the global environment are singled out: Loss of biodiversity; depletion of fish stocks; desertification; climate change; and air, water and marine pollution.
- n There is a recognition that globalization has added a new dimension to the challenge of sustainable development, acknowledging that while it has opened new challenges and opportunities for the pursuit of sustainable development, the benefits and costs of globalization are unevenly distributed and developing countries face special difficulties in meeting this challenge.
- n A particular focus on, and priority attention to, the fight against the worldwide conditions that pose severe threats to the sustainable development of our people is promised. These include: chronic hunger; malnutrition; foreign occupation; armed conflicts; illicit drug problems; organized crime; corruption; natural disasters; illicit arms trafficking; trafficking in persons; terrorism; intolerance and incitement to racial, ethnic, religious and other hatreds; xenophobia; and endemic, communicable and chronic diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis.
- n Women and indigenous peoples are especially mentioned in the political declaration, with governments committing to ensure that women's empowerment and emancipation, and gender equality are integrated in all activities encompassed within Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and reaffirming the vital role of the indigenous peoples in sustainable development.

- n The reality that global society has the means and is endowed with the resources to address the challenges of poverty eradication and sustainable development is recognized. Developed countries that have not done so are urged to make concrete efforts towards the internationally agreed levels of Official Development Assistance.
- n Broad-based participation in policy formulation, decision-making and implementation at all levels and stable partnerships with all major groups respecting the independent, important roles of each of these is promised.
- n There is agreement on the need for private sector corporations to enforce corporate accountability which should take place within a transparent and stable regulatory environment.
- n There is a commitment to undertake to strengthen and improve governance at all levels, for the effective implementation of Agenda 21, the Millennium Development Goals and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.
- n Governments recognize that the achievement of the goals of sustainable development require more effective, democratic and accountable international and multilateral institutions.
- n Governments commit to implement the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and to expedite the achievement of its time-bound, socio-economic and environmental targets.

Source: www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/1009wssd_pol_declaration.doc

ANNEX II

THE PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION ***A SUMMARY***

- n **Introduction:** Governments reaffirm commitment to the Rio Principles, Agenda 21 and to achieving the UN Millennium development goals. They recognize that good governance, peace, security, stability, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms are essential for sustainable development.
- n **Poverty eradication:** Dealing with poverty is identified as the greatest global challenge and poverty-related targets, goals and initiatives are reaffirmed or established with an emphasis on giving the poor access to health, water, land, energy, food, education, infrastructure, credit, sustainable technologies for agriculture and natural resources management, and housing. A World Solidarity Fund, voluntary in nature, is established.
- n **Changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production:** Governments acknowledge that changing the way societies produce and consume is indispensable for sustainable development. This section identifies actions that could be done to accelerate this shift, including initiatives that would result in delinking economic growth and environmental degradation through improved efficiency and sustainability. The transition to a sustainable energy future is emphasized though governments were not able to agree to time-bound targets that would result in the increase in the contribution of renewable energy sources to total energy supply.
- n **Protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development:** Time-bound targets on access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, the development of integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans, maintaining or restoring depleted fisheries stocks, and the reduction of the rate of destruction of biodiversity are adopted. Governments recognize the rights and the role of indigenous and local communities in utilizing and managing natural resources.
- n **Sustainable development in a globalizing world:** The opportunities offered by globalization are acknowledged together with the recognition that there remain serious challenges, with poorer countries facing special difficulties in responding effectively to these opportunities and challenges. Governments support the successful completion of the work programmes contained in the Doha Ministerial Declaration (on international trade) and the implementation of the Monterrey Consensus (on development cooperation). They also decide to actively promote corporate responsibility and accountability, including through the full development and effective implementation of intergovernmental agreements and measures.

- n **Health and sustainable development:** There is recognition that sustainable development can only be achieved in the absence of a high prevalence of debilitating diseases. Time-bound targets on health are incorporated, including health literacy, reduction of mortality rates, and HIV/AIDS.
- n **Sustainable development of small island developing states:** Actions and commitments to support the sustainable development of small island developing states are identified.
- n **Sustainable development for Africa:** Actions to support sustainable development for Africa are identified.
- n **Other regional initiatives:** Various initiatives on sustainable development in Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, West Asia and Europe are recognized.
- n **Means of implementation:** Governments recognize the need for significant increases in the flow of financial resources, in particular to developing countries, to achieve sustainable development. Facilitating greater flows of foreign direct investment, substantially increasing Official Development Assistance (ODA) and exploring ways of generating new public and private innovative sources of finance for development purposes are identified as the principal strategies. The implementation of the outcomes of the Monterrey Consensus and the completion of the Doha work programme are singled out as priorities.
- n **Institutional framework for sustainable development:** Governments call for the strengthening of the institutional framework for sustainable development at the international level. They reaffirm that the Commission on Sustainable Development should continue to be the high-level body on sustainable development within the UN. Actions to strengthen institutional arrangements at the regional and national levels are also recognized.