

# STATEMENT ON THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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The Johannesburg World Summit was the biggest United Nations conference ever held. It was attended by 17 000 delegates, including 105 heads of state and government. Altogether 180 countries were officially represented at the Summit. In addition, 500 parallel events took place in Johannesburg and elsewhere in the country. It is estimated that the total number of international delegates attending the Summit and its parallel events was 37 000.

In our view the World Summit on Sustainable Development has opened the way for the world to take new strides in the foremost challenge of our time - the eradication of poverty and closing the gap between rich and poor, combined with protection of the environment.

What mattered as representatives of over 180 countries grappled with a whole range of complex and interrelated issues was that there should, at the end of it all, be a critical mass of agreement on a new agenda for practical action that could decisively alter the global framework for sustainable development.

Madam Speaker, the Summit constituted a huge victory for human development and for the environment. It fulfilled a number of key objectives:

- o The Summit created the correct balance of the three pillars of sustainable development, which are social development, economic growth and the protection of the environment. This is a decisive shift from the predominantly wrong perspective over the past decade that sustainable development equals the protection of the environment.
- o The Summit emphatically pronounced that sustainable development cannot be achieved separately from the quest to eradicate poverty, and that the growing gap between rich and poor is one of the biggest threats to sustainable development. Among the decisions in this regard is the decision to establish a world poverty fund.
- o The Summit introduced a major shift from the donor-recipient paradigm to one that focuses on the obstacle to economic growth in poor countries posed by the unfair global economic system. While there is agreement to increasing aid from rich to poor countries, there is, more importantly, an acknowledgement that by far the biggest obstacle to poverty eradication is lack of market access and the anti-poor trade system.
- o The cause of the African continent was greatly advanced with the practical focus on the New Partnership for Africa's Development.
- o The Summit served to advance the cause of multilateralism during this troubled time in the world. It asserted the centrality of the United Nations and called for democratic global governance.
- o The Summit brought a global focus on the state of the environment, and renewed high-level commitment to environmental protection.

## **Decisions**

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which was adopted by consensus, includes programmes to deliver water, energy, health care, agricultural development and a better environment for the world's poor.

New targets will have enormous impact on the global agenda:

- o In addition to the already agreed target of halving the number of people unable to access safe drinking water by 2015, it was agreed also to halve the number of people without basic sanitation by 2015.
- o Countries agreed to reverse the trend in biodiversity loss by 2010 and to restore collapsed fish stocks by 2015.
- o Chemicals with a detrimental health impact will be phased out by 2020.
- o Energy services will be extended to 35% of African households over the next 10 years.

We believe that the Johannesburg Summit shifted the focus of world leaders from policy debates to the real task of "making it happen" and achieving high-level commitments by heads of state and leaders from business and civil society to meet the goals set. As testimony to this, many concrete actions, countries and stakeholders announced partnerships and funding targets. Over 300 partnerships were launched, including 32 energy initiatives, 21 water programmes and 32 programmes for biodiversity and ecosystem management.

The South African Parliament played an instrumental role in the Summit. Firstly, the extraordinary meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Union at the Sandton Sun Hotel that was attended by an official multiparty delegation of more than 25 members and, secondly, the Workshop on Clean Air and Clean Water facilitated by Parliamentarians for Global Action and co-hosted by South Africa's Ministries of Health and Water Affairs and Forestry, and attended by 16 members of parliament from South Africa.

The Parliamentary Workshop on Clean Air and Clean Water was a unique forum that brought together members of parliament from over 100 countries, including South Africa, with leading environmental experts, non-governmental organisations and business leaders to highlight the success of legislation to reduce air and water pollution and illustrate the potential to implement similar acts internationally.

Members of parliament also played a prominent role in the Global Civil Society Forum.

## **Follow-up in South Africa**

Government is in the process of developing a detailed response to the Johannesburg decisions. However, it has already been decided that all departments are to integrate the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation into their work. It is government's view that sustainable development should not be regarded as an add-on, but should be an organic part of what we do. We must avoid the danger of making sustainable development the responsibility of just one organ of state. Sustainable development is very much about integrated government.

(This is an abridged version of the statement to Parliament).