

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Johannesburg 26. August - 4. September 2002

NORDIC NGOs VIEWPOINTS AND SUGGESTIONS

Millions of people live in extreme poverty, where their fundamental human rights are being violated. Environmental problems are on the increase. The world's economic and political systems are dominated by extreme unequal distribution of resources and power. The situation is unacceptable.

In August-September 2002, the United Nations is arranging a World Summit on Sustainable development (WSSD) in Johannesburg – 10 years after the Rio - Conference. On that occasion the world's leaders must show in words and actions that together we are able to reach the goals of Agenda21 and the Millennium Declaration. The world's leaders should also take into consideration new problems and challenges evolving from for instance globalisation.

The Nordic NGO community expects that our governments will actively participate in the WSSD process, and carry on our countries' traditionally strong commitment to sustainable and fair development. We challenge you to make use of this opportunity of creating increased commitment and knowledge about the cause. We ask you to contribute to the Johannesburg Summit being a success. For this to happen the world's leaders must decide to intensify efforts towards sustainable and fair development. They must come to an agreement that ensures a new balance between economic, social and environmental development. This agreement should be based upon the principle of common, but differentiated responsibility. Women-related issues should permeate the WSSD process.

We envisage an agreement comprising of a powerful political declaration and a plan of action for the implementation of the Agenda21 goals and relevant Millennium goals. Both the declaration and plan of action should contain mechanisms that ensure implementation.

The Nordic NGO community has developed common viewpoints and suggestions, which we ask you to carry forward in the WSSD process. We are of the opinion that the Johannesburg agreement should:

Poverty:

Confirm the Millennium goal to halve the proportion of people whose income is less than a dollar a day by 2015.

Ascertain that it is unacceptable and undignified that people live in poverty in a world with enough resources to meet every body's basic needs.

Stress that to win the battle against poverty, it is necessary to redistribute the world's resources and power by:

- Increasing the flow of aid from the North to the South. All OECD countries should reach the 0.7 target within 2006. Countries that have not already reached this target should immediately enforce plans for scaling up. At least 50% of the aid should go to least developed countries, and at least 20% should go to the agricultural sector and natural resource management. The 20/20 Initiative (funds for basic education and health) agreed at the World Social Summit in 1995 in Copenhagen must be followed up. In addition, institutions must be built and capacity improved to handle aid.
- Introducing new international tariffs (such as the Tobin Tariff) in order to create new sources of financing sustainable development.
- Intensifying and changing the criteria for the international debt relief program, including the cancellation of all illegitimate debt immediately i.e. debt that is threatening fundamental human rights, that is taken up by undemocratic regimes for illegitimate purposes, or that has grown to unmanageable proportions. Abolishing conditions for structural adjustment. Considering the cancellation of developing countries' debt in the light of the ecological debt that countries in the North have with the countries in the South. Setting up a judicial mechanism within the UN to evaluate the legitimacy of the debt load that developing countries have, and these countries' ability to repay their debts in case of economic crisis. On that basis, endorse the cancellation of illegitimate and/or unpayable debt.
- Adopting a plan on financing for sustainable development.
- Acknowledging that women constitute an increasingly larger proportion of the poor. This situation has to be reversed by giving women better economic opportunities, political rights and access to education and health services.
- Also acknowledging that poor and marginalised groups must be given more power and influence in resource management, as well as access to natural resources. This will in turn promote the environmental cause.
- Ensuring that traditional and local knowledge is respected and utilised, and not stolen and/or monopolised through patent systems.

Food and land reform:

Confirm the Millennium goal to halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger by 2015.

State that it is unacceptable and undignified that people starve in a world with enough food for every body.

Stress that food is a human right, and that all countries must provide their citizens with the opportunity to feed themselves through their own production and/or purchasing power. Inter-national collaboration or agreements, including multilateral trade rules, should not hinder states from maintaining the right to food.

Recognise that it is up to each country to ban patents on life, and genetic modification of plants and animals.

Pointe out that in many countries land distribution and reform is necessary to prevent starvation.

Underline that farmers' rights to cultivate and process their own harvest should be strengthened and protected by national and international law.

Water:

Confirm the Millennium goal to halve the proportion of people unable to reach or afford safe drinking water by 2015.

Adopt the goal to halve the proportion of people living without adequate sanitary by 2015.

Maintain that access to water is a human right (ref. Convention on Childrens Rights of 1989)

Implement the recommendations from the Freshwater Conference held in December 2001 in Bonn where it is stated i.a. that national governments are responsible for implementing an integrated and fair watershed management, and that involvement by private sector in the water sector should not be a prerequisite for grants to developing countries. Furthermore the management should be administered at the lowest appropriate level and involve local users, especially women. This requires local capacity building.

Recognise that fresh water is a common resource that should be managed within the public domain and is not suited for privatisation.

Decide that international cooperation on freshwater must be strengthened and continued within the framework of the UN. And to develop a global plan of action on fresh water that should focus in particular on initiatives that will reduce the water fetching burden of women in rural areas and facilitate their full participation in decision-making processes.

HIV/AIDS

Adopt the goal to halt or begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2005, and to provide special assistance to children orphaned by HIV/AIDS immediately.

Stress that HIV/AIDS is a global catastrophe and a global responsibility. One must mobilise maximum political will and participation of civil society in order to reduce its spread, and improve the living conditions of the people affected by HIV/AIDS.

Underline that the declaration adopted at UNGASS on HIV/AIDS in June 2001 in New York must be implemented.

Commit particularly rich nations to contribute with at least 10 billion USD annually to the Global Health and Aids Fund.

Stress that HIV-positive and people living with AIDS should have access to medical treatment and that patent regulations and costs must not hinder such access.

Point out that in many countries, women are more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS than men and that special measures should be initiated to counteract this situation.

Globalisation

Recognise that human and environmental considerations must be the basis for political decisions and economic development. Furthermore, consideration for sustainable development must be integrated into international organisations in the areas of trade and economics. Market-based solutions should not be chosen whereby these choices threaten the basic social rights of poor people, such as the right to food, water, basic education and basic health services.

Underscore that economic globalisation should bring benefits to the poor and not create environmental problems. In that regard it should be stressed that:

- The rich nations should grant products from the South improved market access, including duty free treatment for industrial products. These concessions must be bound in the World Trade Organisation (WTO).
- All rich nations should provide duty free access for all products from the least developed countries ("everything but arms initiatives"). These concessions should also be bound in the WTO.
- Developing countries have the right to levy tariffs on imported agricultural products and to subsidise their own agricultural production in order to maintain the right to food.
- Developing countries should be given the possibility to protect their own key industries. The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) should also take that into account.

- Subsidies of environmental damaging activities and export subsidies must be banned.
- The WTO-rules should not limit a country's opportunity of protecting the environment.
- Genuine technology transfer from the North to the South should take place. WTO-regulations should contribute to that end.
- UN conventions, such as multilateral environmental agreements and ILO conventions should supersede WTO-rules.
- Arrangement for direct trade with marginalised, small producers should be developed, and efforts to ensure ethical trade i.e. trade with goods that are produced in accordance with international work and environmental standards, should be strengthened.

TNCs

Initiate a binding international agreement on corporate accountability to ensure that trans-national companies (TNCs) respect fundamental human rights, international labour standards, and multilateral environmental agreements. Such a binding international agreements should also discourage corruption and ensure that the host countries gain from the trans-national companies' profit-making activities and technology.

Point to the need for a re-evaluation of the Global Compact Initiative to secure that this initiative promotes and does not hinder sustainable development. The public should be given the rights to information on companies participating in the Global Compact.

Production and consumption

Underline that to achieve sustainable development, it is necessary to change production and consumption patterns particularly in the industrialised countries.

Emphasise that environmental costs must be internalised by increased use of measures such as green taxes, product labelling, emission-bans, and awareness campaigns.

Point out that the Rio-Principle on precaution and polluter pays, should be followed up in practice and in that regard a binding international agreement on liability should be negotiated. Such an agreement would make producers economically liable for the products they release to the market.

Acknowledge that all people have the right to an equal part of the earth i.e. a given amount of resources (ecological share) and that the understanding of ecological share should be a part of the sustainability concept.

Climate:

State that all countries must implement the Kyoto Protocol immediately.

Stress that man-made climate changes must be stopped and that climate gas emissions must be reduced by 60-80% of global levels (ref. the climate panel's reports). The industrialised countries must carry the main part of the reduction.

Energy:

Point out that developing countries should be assured access to energy services to fulfil basic human needs. It should be put more efforts into developing decentralised energy solutions based on renewable energy sources such as solar energy, bioenergy, wind and water. In this regard, the rich nations should provide developing countries with technology transfer. Oil exporting nations and nations that export other fossil fuels and/or nuclear energy, have a particular responsibility for the transfer of such technology.

Maintain that international financial institutions and national export credit arrangements should support the use of renewable energy sources and not fossil and/or nuclear energy.

Underline that rich nations must increase their energy efficiency and use of renewable energy sources. The percentage of commercially renewable energy per country should be at least 20% by 2010.

Decide that subsidies on raw fossil materials and energy production from such substances should be discontinued, first and foremost by the wealthy nations.

Acknowledge that the use of atomic energy should be dismantled.

War and Peace:

Maintain the Rio Principles 24 and 25 that war is inherently destructive for sustainable development, and that peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.

Initiate an extensive study/analysis on the effects of military production and consumption on sustainable development.

Encourage more research on the relationship between armed conflict, environment and development.

Information participation and complaint:

Emphasise that environmental problems can only be solved by active public participation, which requires the public's right to environmental information and participation in decision making, as well as the right to lodge complaints and litigation in the field of environment.

Encourage negotiations of binding regional agreements based upon the Århus Convention.

Global governance:

Stress that global governance for sustainable development should be strengthened.

Point out that the goal of sustainable development should be integrated, respected and followed up by all the relevant UN organisations, the World Bank, IMF and WTO.

Establish an organ within the United Nations, possibly based on the Commission for Sustainable Development, that will contribute to that end.

Recognize that international governance should be strengthened beyond the decision made at the UNEP Governing Council Meeting held in February 2002 in Cartagena. UNEP should be upgraded to a specialised agency and be given the responsibility for all multilateral environmental agreements. Moreover, UNEP should be given increased resources, and contributions should be provided according to the principle on common, but differentiated responsibility. The global environmental facility (GEF) should be more closely linked to UNEP.

Signed by:

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The Norwegian Forum on Development and Environment - a coalition of around 60 Norwegian NGOs

The Danish '92 Group - a coalition of 21 Danish environment and development NGOs

Landvernd – an umbrella organisation of around 40 Icelandic NGOs

Green Youth of Sweden

Lund Chapter of the UN Association of Sweden

Stockholm Chapter of the UN Association of Sweden

The Africa Groups

The Future in Our Hands

The Green Library in Lund

The Guatemalan Association of Lund

The Swallows India-Bangladesh Section

The Swedish Consumer Coalition

The Swedish UNIFEM Committee

The Swedish Association of Kernel Farms

Women for Peace

Young Left of Sweden