

EARTH SUMMIT 2002 EXPLAINED

Develop vt. 1. Bring to maturity 2. Elaborate 3. Improve value or change use of 4. Evolve 5. Bring forth, bring out 7. Grow to a maturer state **Development** vt. Stage of growth or advancement

Sustain vt 1. Keep, hold up 2. Endure 3. Keep alive 4. Confirm 5. Nourish 6. Encourage, stand

Where did it all start?

Sustainable development lies at the heart of the Earth Summit process. The journey toward sustainable development has not been straightforward and is far from being fully achieved. In the last thirty years a whole series of events have brought us to the wide-ranging interpretation of sustainable development that we see today.

The concept of sustainable development dates back a long way but it was at the UN Conference on Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972) that the international community met for the first time to consider global environment and development needs (Figure 1). The Conference led to the formation of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP). The Stockholm Declaration and Action Plan, which were also produced, defined principles for the preservation and enhancement of the natural environment, and highlighted the need to support people in this process. The Conference indicated that "industrialised" environmental concerns, such as habitat degradation, excessive consumption of natural resources and climate change, were not necessarily relevant issues for all countries. Development strategies were not meeting the needs of the poorest countries and communities. However, it was the pending environmental problems that dominated the meeting and wider public awareness. Books, such as *"The Silent Spring"* by Rachel Carson and *"Limits to Growth"* from the Club of Rome, gave a foretaste of the growing view that, if international development continues along its present path, the world is rapidly heading for a major breakdown.

In the 1980's the UN set up the World Commission on Environment and Development, also known as the Brundtland Commission. They produced *"Our Common Future"*, otherwise known as the Brundtland Report, which framed much of what would become the 40 chapters of Agenda 21 and the 27 principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. It defined sustainable development as development which;

"meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs"

The 20th anniversary of Stockholm took place in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. The UN Conference on Environment and Development, the *"Earth Summit"*, agreed Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration. These documents outlined key policies for achieving sustainable development that meets the needs of the poor and recognises the limits of development to meet global needs. "Needs" was therefore interpreted not solely in terms of economic interests but also to be those of a fully functional, *harmonious*, global system that incorporates people and ecosystems. Figure 2 outlines the four broad areas of action within Agenda 21

Redressing the Balance

The Summit brought environment and development issues firmly into the public arena. Along with the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 it led to agreement on two legally binding conventions: Biological Diversity and the Framework Convention on Climate Change. It also produced a Statement of Forest Principles. The Earth Summit gave rise to a number of positive



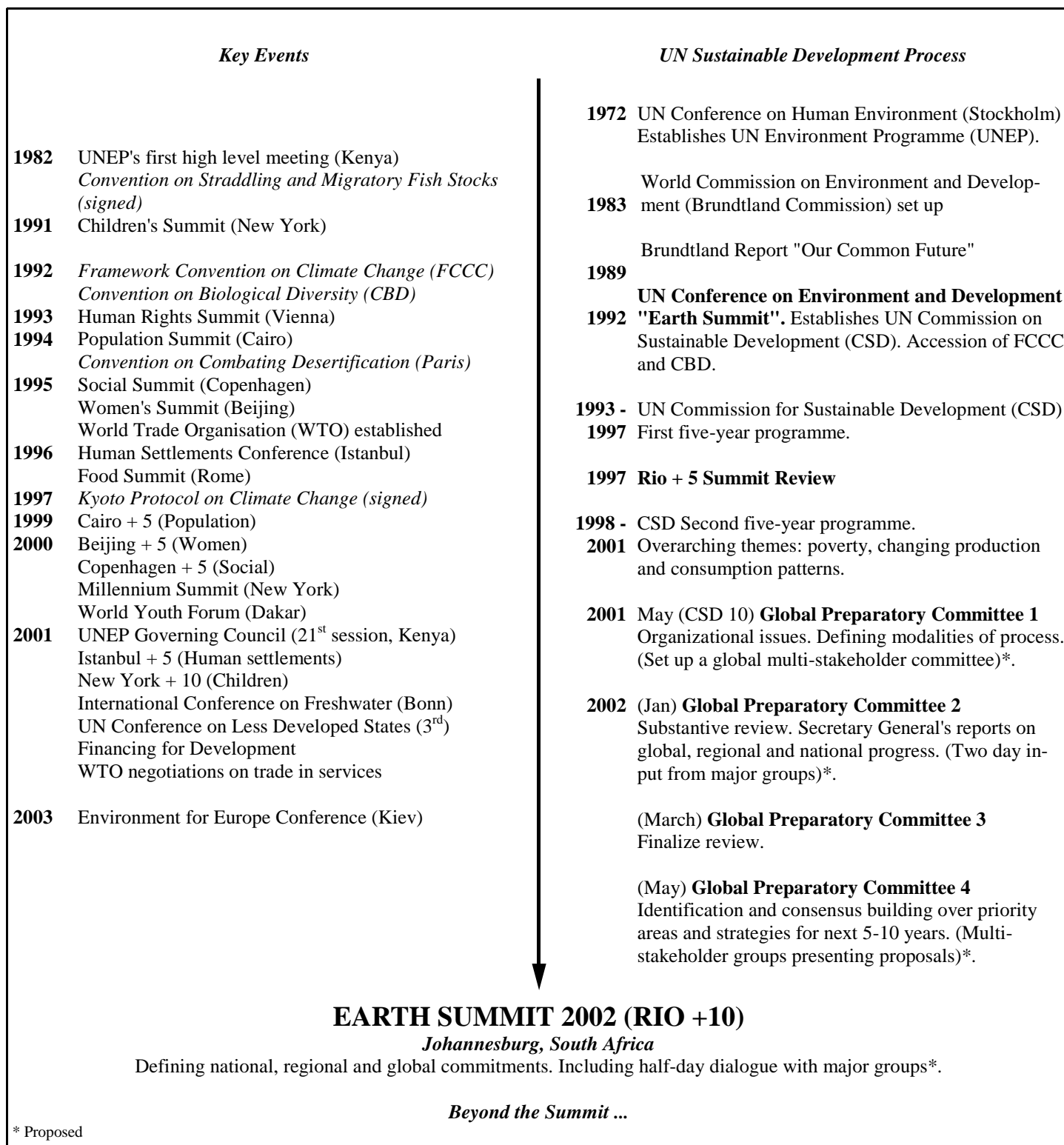
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Briefing Paper



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responses including the emergence of thousands of Local Agenda 21 initiatives and the enhanced political profile of environmental issues. It led to the formation of the Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) and many countries set up sustainable development commissions and national strategies.



* Proposed

However, the description of sustainable development in Agenda 21 called for total shift in the status quo of prevalent value systems and institutional processes. Such global change could never have occurred over night. When progress in sustainable development was assessed at Rio + 5 (New York, 1997) a number of gaps were identified, particularly with regard to social equity and poverty. This was largely reflected by falling official development assistance (ODA) and growing international debts, along with failures to improve technology transfer, capacity building for participation and development, institutional coordination, and reduce excessive levels of production and consumption. The +5 review

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called for the ratification, reinforcement and stronger implementation of the growing number of international agreements and conventions which refer to environment and development.

Figure 2. Elements of Agenda 21

	Issues
Social and Economic dimensions to development	Poverty, Production and Consumption, Health, Human Settlement, Integrated decision making
Conservation and management of natural resources	Atmosphere, Oceans and Seas, Land, Forests, Mountains, Biological Diversity, Ecosystems, Biotechnology, Freshwater resources, Toxic Chemicals, Hazardous radioactive and solid wastes
Strengthening role of Major Groups	Youth, Women, Indigenous Peoples, Non-Government Organisations, Local Authorities, Trade Unions, Business, Scientific and technical communities, Farmers
Means of Implementation	Finance, Technology transfer, Information, Public Awareness, Capacity Building, Education, Legal Instruments, Institutional frameworks

Building Momentum

The 55th session of the UN General Assembly agreed to give the Summit the official title of “*World Summit on Sustainable Development*”. It also agreed that the Summit will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa. The location of the summit is very significant. By taking place in a southern country and in Africa it will help to draw international attention to the critical needs of those countries and more particularly of that region. Whilst the exact date if the Summit is yet to be agreed, some elements are fairly sure. The preparations for the Summit are likely to take a three-tier structure (Figure 3) and, unlike the 1997 review, Earth Summit 2002 will carry out the review in advance of the Summit meeting itself. This is with the hope that people will arrive at the Summit ready to identify steps to take critical and more problematic areas forward to implementation. Immediately preceding the ninth session of the CSD in April 2001 the first global preparatory committee for 2002 will begin.

Primarily the Summit offers an opportunity to strengthen the global commitment to sustainable development. Ratification of agreements, such as the Kyoto and Biosafety Protocols, along with other outstanding agreements, such as Persistent Organic Pollutants and on Migratory and Straddling Fish Stocks, could be a part of this commitment.

The Summit will need to secure innovative and significantly increased levels finance for sustainable development. This will include additional aid, debt relief and enhanced access to Foreign Direct Investment. The international architecture will also be reviewed to consider areas for institutional improvement, to enhance coordination, build capacity and accountability, and to develop concrete and lasting programmes. The Summit could not only address those problems raised in Agenda 21 but also tackle new, critical issues that are facing the world in the 21st Century.

Beyond the Summit

Clearly the more people and organizations who are willing to contribute to the Earth Summit process and willing to encourage others to do so the more likely that the process will begin to build momentum. We each have a right, a role and a responsibility to contribute to sustainable development. Before Rio it was said that;

"while the Earth Summit will constitute a test of nations willingness to institute fundamental changes in economic behavior, the challenges ahead will be far more daunting. Change is seldom easy"

Sustainable development is a dynamic process, and it's one that will continue to evolve and grow as lessons are learnt and ideas re-examined. By reinvigorating the spirit of Rio we can begin to move to a deeper and broader level of sustainability.

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Figure 3. Preparations for Earth Summit 2002

	Activities
National <i>Late 2000 - Spring 2001</i>	National preparations will be coordinated by governments and national multi-stakeholder committees for sustainable development - to begin to define national agendas and undertake a review of progress. Public consultations and meetings, previous National Reports to the CSD and National Strategies for Sustainable Development will all help to inform this process. The UN CSD has suggested four national activities, in particular countries are asked to define 4- 5 national targets (by April 2001) to take domestic sustainable development forward.
Regional <i>Spring - Winter 2001</i>	Regional meetings of governments and other major groups will seek to build consensus over critical issues for progressing regional sustainable development - identifying areas of priority action and highlighting local examples of good practice. The processes will be informed by roundtables of regional experts, which will seek to highlight problems, solutions and priorities, as well as to set targets. Sub-regional processes may also contribute to this process.
Global <i>Late 2001 - Summer 2002</i>	Immediately after the ninth CSD (15 th -27 th April 2001) the first Global Preparatory Committee (Prep Comm I) meeting will take place. The UN Secretary General will produce a global report on progress for the second PC, as well as reports on the outcomes of the regional and national review processes. By 2002 UNEP is planning to produce Global Environment Outlook 3 - a thirty year review on global environmental issues. Other intergovernmental and international institutions will also input to the process, along with major groups.



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