

The Gauteng Declaration

Representatives of 22 regional governments¹ (RGs) and several associations of regional governments (listed at the end) met together in Johannesburg during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. They agreed to the following declaration.

1. We take this opportunity on the Tenth Anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit to commit ourselves to sustainable development as outlined in the Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration, and the United Nations' Millennium Declaration.
2. The spheres of government that we represent are responsible for many of the policies, systems and services that can make possible a more sustainable future for our citizens.
3. We consider RGs, from the point of view of proximity, efficiency and spatial dimension, to be strategically located as a necessary and crucial sphere of government for the development of policy for and implementation of sustainable development. By reason of scale we are in many circumstances best placed to address specific sustainability issues and in other circumstances we are essential partners in solidarity with other spheres of government and civil society for integrated and coordinated policy and implementation. In cooperation relationships with other spheres of government, the principle of subsidiarity should be applied.
4. Sustainable development integrates economic, social and environmental objectives in order to create the best possible conditions for human development now and in the future. Sustainable development should create prosperous and more equitable societies, increase employment opportunities, help to meet the basic human needs of everyone for food and water, shelter, energy, sustainable livelihoods, education and health care at the same time as protecting the physical environment and natural resources which nurture us. We commit ourselves to seeking innovative solutions in order to make all development in our regions sustainable development.
5. Democracy, the rule of law, the establishment of peace and security, the recognition of human rights and freedoms, the opportunity for people to participate in decisions that affect them, the eradication of poverty and the promotion of sustainable consumption and production are all essential for the full achievement of sustainable development. They are themselves strengthened by the active promotion of sustainable development. In giving our full commitment to sustainable development for our societies we commit ourselves at the RG sphere to play our part in striving for a world that is free from conflict, in which democracy and respect for human rights are supported everywhere, and whose people are free from want and all forms of unjust discrimination.
6. We welcome the current emphasis placed by the Secretary General of the United Nations on achieving sustainability in the areas of Water and Sanitation, Energy, Health, Agricultural Production, and Biodiversity and Eco-system Management (WEHAB). The RGs we represent are giving and will give high priority to this set of issues within the sustainable development framework.
7. We consider that the implementation of sustainable development needs a strategic framework for all governments. We believe that this applies strongly in our own regional spheres. RGs need sustainable development strategies as central frameworks for linking all their other strategies, ensuring that each is sustainable and that they are mutually supportive of each other. A good regional sustainable development strategy will recognize the importance of those features that distinguish the identities of regions as well as those features that help bind the broader society together. Such strategies need to be developed in cooperation with the broadest possible array of relevant stakeholders and partners, and there should be opportunities for active participation and engagement by stakeholders in their implementation. The strategies should include sections focussing on the five areas that the UN Secretary General has identified as critical (WEHAB). Some RGs already have or are developing

¹ There are very many different types and names for regional governments in different parts of the world. The defining feature of the emerging group of governments participating in the new RG network for sustainable development is that they govern territories that are the largest and first level of political subdivision within individual nation states represented at the United Nations. RGs include for example such familiar examples as Regions, Provinces, States and Prefectures, but also Autonomous Communities, Communes, Departments, Districts, Divisions, Emirates, Federations, Governorates, Juletule, Kilil, Nations, Oblastey, Rayons, Territories, Voblasti, Welayatlar and Zones

sustainable development strategies on these lines. We call on each RG throughout the world to commit as soon as possible to a date by which they will have such strategies in place.

8. Individual RGs have a great deal to learn from one another about the practice and implementation of sustainable development and could have many opportunities to collaborate and establish partnerships, both with near neighbours and with others in more distant parts of the world. At our meeting in Gauteng a number of leading RGs around the world have declared their intent to establish a global network for sharing information and experience about sustainable development at regional sphere and promoting collaboration. It should form a basis for cooperative projects or programmes that contribute to this shared learning process. We call upon all RGs throughout the world to join us in development of this network.
9. RGs both want and need to work with all other spheres of government and with other stakeholders in promoting sustainable development. We call upon the Heads of Government and other world leaders assembled in Johannesburg and the United Nations itself to recognize and support the necessary and essential role of the RGs in the promotion of sustainable development and in the achievement of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Targets. We also recognise that our shared work in this field must develop in a spirit of close collaboration and partnership including fostering and supporting community-based sustainability initiatives. Similarly we invite international organizations, local government and all other stakeholder groups to work with us in the development of their work as equal and essential partners on sustainable development.

31st August 2002

Governments Participating in the Conference

1. Australian Capital Territory, Australia
2. Basque Country, Spain
3. State of Bavaria, Germany
4. Government of Catalonia, Spain
5. Province of Entre Rios, Argentina
6. Government of Flanders, Belgium
7. Province of Gauteng, South Africa
8. Greater London Authority, United Kingdom
9. Province of Lapland, Finland
10. State of Mato Grosso, Brazil
11. Province of Mpumalanga, South Africa
12. State of Pennsylvania, USA
13. State of Pernambuco, Brazil
14. Region of Poitou - Charentes, France
15. State of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
16. State of Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil
17. State of Tocantins, Brazil
18. Government of Tuscany, Italy
19. Walloon Government, Belgium
20. Welsh Assembly Government, United Kingdom
21. Province of West Java, Indonesia
22. State of Western Australia, Australia

Associations Participating in the Conference

1. Association of European Regions
2. Conference des regions Peripheriques Maritimes
3. The Northern Forum
4. Committee of the Regions of the European Union