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**World Summit on Sustainable Development:
What Has Been Accomplished, What Are the Next Steps**

The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg was held from 26 August – 4 September 2002. It marked a major departure from previous UN conferences in many ways, in structure and in outcome, that could have a major effect on the way the international community approaches problem solving in the future.

The outcome of the Johannesburg Summit has been viewed by many rather unfavourably. Many representatives of non-governmental organizations who attended the Summit and other participants were unhappy with the results. Indeed, the Summit, that was supposed to be focused on implementation, did not produce a particularly dramatic outcome – there were no agreements that will lead to new treaties and many of the agreed targets were derived from a number of assorted lower profile meetings. As an example of dissatisfaction, I would like to quote Jonathan Lash, President of the World Resources Institute, who said, “We have missed an opportunity to increase energy production from non-polluting sources like solar, biomass, and wind, and to provide the many companies taking action to reduce emissions with a secure framework for their actions.”

However it would not be correct to say that it was a waste of time and resources and that nothing has been accomplished. In fact the achievements are significant but in a subtler manner than we have got used to. The history of UN conferences shows that many agreements signed by heads of states and governments stay on paper and never get implemented. The progress (or lack thereof) in implementing sustainable development since the 1992 Earth Summit is just one example – with poverty deepening and environmental degradation worsening.

So what have been accomplished in Johannesburg? Some important new targets were established, such as: to halve the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015; to use and produce chemicals by 2020 in ways that do not lead to significant adverse effects on human health and the environment; to maintain or restore depleted fish stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield on an urgent basis and where possible by 2015; and to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity.

The interest in the Summit was substantial. One hundred world leaders addressed the Summit. More than 22,000 people participated in WSSD, including more than 10,000 delegates, 8,000 NGOs and representatives of civil society, and 4,000 members of the press. This United Nations conference was attended by the largest number of NGO representatives ever who had significant input in the course of discussions and in the outcome of the Summit. Even those who say that they are dissatisfied with the result admit that their contribution and that of other major groups made a serious impact and was reflected in the final documents. There was also a new level of dialogue in Johannesburg between all the stakeholders, especially between governments, civil society and the private sector. The participants in the Summit were forced to confront the needs and the arguments of other actors in a truly interactive dialogue.

For the first time, outcome documents were not the sole product of the Summit. While the negotiations still received the lion's share of attention, the Summit also resulted in the launch of more than 300 voluntary partnerships, each of which will bring additional resources to support efforts to implement sustainable development. These partnerships, tied to the

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government commitments, provide a built-in mechanism to ensure implementation. It will therefore be a test whether this approach to solving problems on international level is something that can be repeated in the future and is viable.

As this Conference is focusing specifically on relationship between business and sustainable development, I would like to elaborate more on these partnerships. Mr. Nitin Desai, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, cited the partnerships as one of the most important outcomes of the Summit. According to him, the partnerships offer a way to get away from the donor-driven frameworks of the past, and allow representatives from developed and developing countries to sit down together to formulate plans when something has to be done. Mr. Desai also stated, "Some people have said that the partnerships are corporate-led. This is not true. The vast majority are led by non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations. But even if there is corporate involvement, that is not a bad thing. We will not be credible if we don't have the participation of business. We need to bring the energy of corporations into our agenda if we are going to make good on our commitments."

I would now like to quote once more Jonathan Lash, President of the World Resources Institute whose critical words I cited earlier. He also noted, "This Summit will be remembered not for the treaties, the commitments, or the declarations it produced, but for the first stirrings of a new way of governing the global commons – the beginnings of a shift ... to ... solution-oriented partnerships that may include non-government organizations, willing governments and other stakeholders."

What exactly are these partnerships and why such importance is attributed to their implementation? They are defined in the Guiding Principles for Partnerships for Sustainable Development (so-called 'type 2 outcomes'). Partnerships for sustainable development are specific commitments by various partners intended to contribute to and reinforce the implementation of the outcomes of the intergovernmental negotiations of the WSSD (Programme of Action and Political Declaration) and to help achieve the further implementation of Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Goals. They are voluntary and based on mutual respect and shared responsibility of the partners involved. They are not intended to substitute commitments made by governments, but rather serve as mechanisms for the delivery of the globally agreed commitments. Partnerships integrate the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development in their design and implementation. They can be arranged among any combination of partners, including governments, regional groups, local authorities, non-governmental actors, international institutions and private sector partners. They have to specify arrangements to monitor and review their performance against the objectives and targets they set and report in regular intervals ('self-reporting'), with reports accessible to the public. Partnerships should have clear objectives and set specific measurable targets and timeframes for their achievement.

What areas do existent partnership cover? Among the topics are: Changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption; Protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development (this includes, among others, agriculture, food security, freshwater, biodiversity, energy, and climate change); Health and sustainable development; Sustainable Tourism; Sustainable development of Small Island Developing States (SIDS); Sustainable development initiatives for Africa; Means of implementation (including sustainable development law, transfer of technology, capacity-building, finance, and education); and Local authorities and urbanization.

A considerable amount of funding has been committed in a rather short time, and much more will be mobilized by these investments. Many partnerships are still evolving and require more partners and funding, but the concept is attracting great interest from most stakeholders. I would like to give you some statistical information. About 60% of the partnerships have a global scope; the remaining 40% have a regional focus. Overall Africa, Asia, including Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and the Pacific Island countries are the region with the highest number of partnerships followed by Latin America and much fewer in Eastern and Central Europe. On financial commitments, over 60% of the 251 partnerships have funding (either to carry out initial phases or entire project). Available information shows

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that over US\$ 250 million has been committed so far and additional US\$ 120 million is being sought or negotiated with potential donors.

The question of monitoring the partnerships is probably one of the most pressing. What is the accountability mechanism to ensure that partnerships are contributing to the goals of sustainable development? Partnerships are self-governing bodies that are supposed to review their performance against the goals that they set for themselves with their own accountability mechanisms. However, as they are also part of the implementation process in the post-Johannesburg phase, they are requested to report to the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), part of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, which is responsible for the follow-up and implementation of the WSSD decisions.

It is also important to emphasize that there is no deadline for the submission of partnership for sustainable development – it is an ongoing process. A partnership will be posted on the Johannesburg Summit website (www.johannesburgsummit.org) if it matches the Guiding Principles.

I would now like to give a few examples of the partnerships, specifically those that involve Eastern Europe and countries of the former Soviet Union.

Transport, Health and Environment Pan-European Programme (PEP). It aims at making progress towards the achievement of transport patterns that are sustainable for health and the environment by focusing work at the Pan-European level on those priorities where further work of the international community is most needed and could make the biggest impact: integration of environmental and health aspects into transport policies and decisions; shift of the demand for transport towards more sustainable mobility; urban transport issues. In addition, special attention will be given to the needs of the Newly Independent States and South-Eastern European countries as well as to areas that are particularly sensitive from an environmental point of view. Partners involved include ministries of transport, health and environment of European countries, World Health Organization (WHO), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), European Commission (EC), other intergovernmental organizations and relevant non-governmental organizations, such as European Federation for Transport and Environment (T&E), International Road Federation (IRF), International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE), International Road Transport Union (IRU) and others. This project is a good indication of interest that organizations representing interests of business community are interested in such partnerships.

EU Water Initiative: Water for Life. The initiative is based on strategic partnerships in specific regions that draw together government, civil society, private sector and others to help achieve the water-related goals. The EU Water Initiative seeks to make significant progress in poverty eradication and health, in the enhancement of livelihoods, and in sustainable economic development and also to serve as a catalyst for peace and security. This initiative provides a platform for strategic partnerships to implement the programmes of action for the WSSD and to contribute to meeting the Millennium Development Goals on water. Under the initiative, the EU seeks to work with its partners specifically to: reinforce political will and commitment to action; make water governance effective and build institutional capacity; improve coordination and cooperation; and increase the efficiency of existing EU aid flows. Partners in this programme are European Commission, Member States of the European Union, Governments of the NIS countries, and African Governments.

As you can see, these are important initiatives of a regional scale that are supposed to have a significant impact on ensuring sustainability in a number of countries.

The real evaluation of the WSSD will only come from the follow-up and implementation of what has been decided Johannesburg. This refers both to the partnerships and to the other outcomes. Commitments made in Johannesburg – on expanding access to water and sanitation, on energy, improving agricultural yields, managing toxic chemicals, protecting biodiversity and improving ecosystem management – are important and valuable. Follow-through on these commitments will be the yardstick of success or failure of the Summit.

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Materials used in preparation of this presentation

1. Documents of the World Summit for Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 26 August – 4 September 2002. <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/index.html>
2. World Chronicle No. 866. UN TV Programme. Guest: Nitin Desai, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.
3. World Chronicle No. 868. UN TV Programme. Guest: Adnan Amin, Director, New York Office, UN Environment Programme.
4. Recording of the NGO Briefing "Follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD): A Focus on Implementation", 17 October 2002.