



UNITED NATIONS

JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT 2002

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT | JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA | 26 AUGUST–4 SEPTEMBER 2002

Press Release

ON EARTH DAY, LEADER OF JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT CALLS FOR GLOBAL ACTION TO PRESERVE WORLD'S NATURAL RESOURCES

22 April, 2002, New York – Speaking on the annual commemoration of Earth Day (today, Monday, April 22), the Secretary-General of the upcoming United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development, Nitin Desai, called on governments worldwide to increase efforts to conserve the Earth's natural resources, and renew their commitment to sustainable development in order to build a secure future for the planet and its people.

“There is mounting evidence that Earth's natural resources are being depleted and destroyed, due mainly to unsustainable patterns of consumption and production,” said Mr. Desai. “For too long, environmentalists and industrialists alike have focused on a false trade-off between environmental protection and economic growth. Sustainable development recognizes that economic well-being, social development, and environmental stewardship are interconnected and must be addressed together.”

The United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development, which will take place August 26 – September 4 in Johannesburg, South Africa, will be the largest meeting ever held on environmental issues and sustainable development. Tens of thousands of government delegates and other participants are expected to attend, including heads of State and Government, business leaders, and leaders of non-governmental organizations. Participants will assess global progress on implementing the blueprint of sustainable development — Agenda 21 — that was agreed at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and produce new commitments for action.

“Problems such as global warming, water shortages, deforestation, and desertification continue,” Mr. Desai said. “The Johannesburg Summit aims to tackle these threats to our future by making the idea of sustainable development a global reality. The Rio Earth Summit created the roadmap for sustainable development, Agenda 21. Johannesburg is about putting that plan into action.”

“The century ahead will see greater changes than any era in human history, as the world's population grows apace, and ever greater strains are put on the Earth's natural resources,” Mr. Desai concluded. “The decisions taken at the Johannesburg Summit will help determine the road we take forward, and whether we leave a better world for future generations.”

About the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg Summit)

The World Summit on Sustainable Development will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from August 26 to September 4. It will be the largest and most important meeting ever held focused on accelerating the integration of economic, environmental, and social development. Heads of State and Government, along with tens of thousands of representatives from governments, businesses, and non-governmental organizations, will attend. The meeting will assess international efforts to implement Agenda 21, the blueprint for sustainable development that was agreed at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, and will launch new initiatives aimed at accelerating sustainable development worldwide.

For More Information on the Johannesburg Summit

Press releases, logistical information, and other background materials are available on the Summit website, www.johannesburgsummit.org, under *Media Info*.

For media inquiries, please contact:

Gavin Hart, Media Consultant to the Secretariat of the World Summit on Sustainable Development at (212) 584-5031 or ghart@corkerygroup.com

Pragati Pascale, tel (212) 963-6870 or Klomjit Chandrapanya, tel (212) 963-9495, UN Department of Public Information, e-mail mediainfo@un.org

###