



UNITED NATIONS

JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT 2002

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT | JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA | 2–11 SEPTEMBER 2002

Press Release

UN ADVANCES PLANS FOR JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT TO SPUR COMMITMENTS FOR ACTION

*Political, corporate and community leaders will seek action
to improve quality of life while protecting resources for future generations*

(29 October 2001, New York) — Preparations for what is expected to be the largest and most important international meeting ever held to address the integration of environmental, economic, and social decision-making — the World Summit on Sustainable Development — are taking a major step forward, as three new initiatives from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, get underway.

- Minister Jan Pronk begins his role as Special Envoy for the Summit
- Nitin Desai, in his additional new role as Secretary-General for the Summit, opens the debate today among General Assembly Committee members in New York
- The Secretary-General's high-level advisory panel for the Summit meets this week for the first time

The Summit will be held in Johannesburg, South Africa from 2 to 11 September 2002, with the goal of generating concrete commitments for action to implement sustainable development — a concept developed over a decade ago to embrace the integration of economic, environmental and social decision-making.

The Johannesburg meeting will address a number of major challenges facing the world today, such as how to harness the benefits of globalization for all, alleviate poverty, improve access to energy, clean water and sanitation, reduce environment-related health problems and promote responsible consumption and production. Currently one fifth of the world's people must survive on less than one dollar a day; about 1.1 billion people lack access to safe drinking water; and two billion people lack access to commercial energy.

"Billions of people have yet to obtain the most basic elements of a healthy life, such as clean drinking water or sanitation," said Nitin Desai. "At the same time, we cannot simply use up the world's resources today and expect that there will be no consequences tomorrow".

Mr. Desai went on to say, "For too long, environmentalists and industrialists alike have seen a false trade-off between environmental protection and economic growth. We hope that Johannesburg introduces a new way of thinking, one that sees economic and environmental health as interlinked, mutually supportive goals."

Agenda 21: from commitment to action

The Summit will build on the implementation of Agenda 21, the landmark plan of action adopted at the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development — the Earth Summit. Agenda 21 broke new ground in integrating environmental, economic and social concerns into a single policy framework. It contains over 2,500 wide-ranging recommendations for action, including detailed proposals for how to reduce wasteful consumption patterns, combat poverty, protect the atmosphere, oceans and biodiversity, and promote sustainable agriculture. This plan of action has stood the test of time as a statement of what needs to be done. In spite of progress in some areas, however, organizers point out that much work remains to bring this strategy fully into practice.

“The best-crafted plan is only as good as its implementation, and we need significant improvement in that area,” said Mr. Desai. “The Johannesburg Summit will ask participants to move beyond talk to action, and will seek to establish clear, quantifiable targets to guide our efforts to improve conditions for this and future generations.”

Participation from all sectors critical

Broad participation from all concerned sectors is vital for the success of the Johannesburg Summit. The UN plans to bring together political leaders and business and industry executives, non-governmental organizations, scientists, representatives of indigenous peoples, local authorities, youth and women’s groups, trade unions, farmers and others, from all around the world. Organizers said it was essential that representatives of these groups bring to the table their own commitments and contributions in order to make sustainable development a reality.

UN Summit leadership appointed

To help move the Johannesburg Summit’s action-oriented agenda forward, United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced several important measures this week. He appointed Mr. Jan Pronk as his Special Envoy for the Summit and designated Mr. Nitin Desai as Secretary-General for the Summit.

Mr. Pronk will meet with political leaders at the highest levels to assess their views and mobilize their commitment to the Johannesburg Summit. He will carry out this task while continuing his present position as Minister of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment for the Netherlands. Mr. Desai will be responsible for overseeing the United Nations substantive and organizational preparations for the Summit, in addition to his current duties as UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

The UN Secretary-General has also established a high-level advisory panel to discuss new approaches to sustainable development issues and to promote the goals of the Summit. The panel, which is holding its first meeting on 29 October in New York, initially comprises twelve distinguished persons with expertise in various fields related to the Summit (see list attached).

Regional preparations underway

Three of the five regional preparatory conferences have already taken place. These conferences are assessing the key challenges, opportunities and constraints relating to sustainable development that each region has faced over the past ten years, and identifying future priorities, new initiatives and the

commitments needed to make progress in the coming years. The reports from these regional meetings will be taken to the global preparatory meetings being held during the first half of 2002, under the chairmanship of Dr. Emil Salim of Indonesia.

In addition, regional roundtables of eminent persons — including politicians, development experts, scientists, academics and other stakeholders — have also contributed their views toward the Summit goals. Chairmen and representatives from these roundtable meetings are in New York this week to brief the General Assembly Committee and to participate in discussions with senior UN officials on the emerging agenda.

Further information

For the latest information on the Johannesburg Summit 2002, visit www.johannesburgsummit.org, the official website of the United Nations Secretariat for the Summit.

The Johannesburg World Summit Company (JOWSCO), on behalf of the Government of South Africa, is managing logistical organization of the Summit in South Africa. For information about the NGO forum or logistical matters such as accommodation and travel, visit the JOWSCO website at: www.joburgsummit2002.com.

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SECRETARY GENERAL'S PANEL FOR THE JOHANNESBURG SUMMIT

LIST OF MEMBERS

Dr. Kamla Chowdhry (India) — Commissioner, World Commission on Forests and Sustainable Development

Ms. Severn Cullis-Suzuki (Canada) — Biology student at Yale University; young environmental activist

Mr. Viktor Danilov-Danilyan (Russia) — Former Minister for Environment and Natural Resources

Ms. Jocelyn Dow (Guyana) — President, Women's Environment and Development Organization

Dr. Jane Goodall (US/Kenya) — Ethnologist known for research on behaviour of chimpanzees and advocate for their protection; founder of the Jane Goodall Institute

Ms. Yolanda Kakabadse (Ecuador) — President, International Union for the Conservation of Nature

Professor Lydia Mkhumbu (Swaziland) — Vice-Chancellor, University of Swaziland

Ambassador Hisashi Owada (Japan) — President, Japan Institute of International Affairs

Professor Geping Qu (China) — Chairman, Environment and Natural Resources Protection Commission, National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China

Mr. Moeen Qureshi (Pakistan) — Chairman, Emerging Markets Partnership; former Senior Vice-President of the World Bank

The Hon. Joseph Warioba Nyalali (Tanzania) — Former Prime Minister

Dr. Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker (Germany) — Member of Parliament; President, Commission of Enquiry on the globalization of the Economy, Science Centre North Rhine, Westphalia
