FACTS ABOUT...

The Johannesburg Summit: An Overview

What is the Johannesburg Summit?
The Johannesburg Summit is a major opportunity for the world to move towards a sustainable future—one that will allow people to meet their needs without harming the environment. Sustainable development is a call for a different approach to development and a different type of international cooperation—it recognizes that decisions taken in one part of the world may affect people in other regions, and requires far-sighted actions to promote global conditions that support progress and benefits for all.

The roadmap for achieving sustainable development was adopted ten years ago at the Rio Summit. But there is still a long way to go. The Johannesburg Summit is expected to bridge the implementation gap through proposals for concrete actions.

The Summit will be the largest ever international meeting on sustainability and will bring together thousands of participants, including heads of State and Government, business leaders and representatives of civil society, to promote sustainable development.

When and where will the Summit be held?
The Summit will take place from 26 August to 4 September 2002 at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa.

What will the outcome of the Summit be?
The main objective of the Summit is to reinvigorate political commitment to sustainable development. It is expected that the Summit will conclude with a clear and unambiguous statement from world leaders, in the form of a "Johannesburg Declaration", reaffirming their commitment to work towards sustainable development. Also, a negotiated implementation plan will outline priority actions needed for sustainable development. In addition, governments, civil society and businesses are being encouraged to bring forward partnership initiatives that will address specific problems and lead to measurable results that will improve people's lives around the world.

Who is responsible for organizing the Summit?
The tenth session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (known as CSD10) is acting as the Preparatory Committee for the Summit, which is the central organizing body. CSD10 is having four preparatory meetings for the Summit during 2001-2002, known as PrepComs. The fourth and final PrepCom will be held at the Ministerial level from 27 May to 7 June 2002 in Bali, Indonesia.

The Preparatory Committee is headed by a Bureau which consists of two representatives from each region of the world (10 members in total). The Bureau for CSD10 has meetings between the CSD10 sessions to guide the process and raise political awareness and support for the Summit among governments and major groups. The Chairman of the Bureau is Dr. Emil Salim from Indonesia.

Overall responsibility for the Summit within the United Nations lies with Mr. Nitin Desai, who is Secretary-General of the Johannesburg Summit and United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs.

In addition to the political organization of the Summit set out above, there are a number of logistical organizational matters, such as accommodation and local transport, that are being handled by the South African Government as the host country. The Johannesburg World Summit Company (JOWSCO) has been created under the auspices of the South African Government to manage these logistical preparations.

Is this going to be a repeat of the Earth Summit?
The Johannesburg Summit is a step forward, moving from concepts to action. Agenda 21, the plan of action for sustainable development adopted at the Earth Summit, remains a powerful, long-term vision and guide for improving the state of the world and the lives of its people. In adopting it, governments recognized that a continuation of present policies would deepen the economic divisions within and between countries, resulting in increased poverty and further dete-

rioration of ecosystems. But they agreed that another course of action that could protect the planet and bring about a more prosperous future was possible. "No country can achieve this on its own," states Agenda 21 in its preamble, but "together we can." Agenda 21 will serve as the basis for the development of tangible initiatives that produce results.

Is this an environmental conference? A conference on poverty?

The Johannesburg Summit is about sustainable development—development that meets the needs of people now and for future generations. It is not a conference on poverty but a conference on the kind of development that should be pursued by both developed and developing nations. However, poverty, over-consumption and unsustainable lifestyles are major concerns of the Johannesburg Summit. Sustainable development therefore seeks to address these concerns through actions that promote economic growth, social development and environmental protection.

The Johannesburg Summit is not just a sequel to the Earth Summit in Rio; nor is it just a follow-up to the recent International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey. It builds upon the achievements of both, but it also seeks to implement the goals agreed at many conferences—including those adopted by world leaders at the Millennium Summit—under the umbrella of sustainable development.

What issues will be addressed at the Summit?

The overriding issue is the extent to which the world can change course and achieve a sustainable future. Such an approach encompasses many other issues, including poverty, freshwater, sanitation, agriculture, desertification and energy. It is about jobs, health and education—and also about the world's oceans, forests, drylands and atmosphere. It is about the special concerns that confront Africa, and also small island developing States. It is about meeting the Millennium Development Goals by 2015, and it is about promoting different lifestyles that can curb over-consumption and production.

Who is going to take the action needed to make these changes?

It is clear that governments will be responsible for implementing the negotiated outcomes of the Summit. But the reality is that governments don't have the resources to do everything that has to be done and implementation of sustainable development requires building partnerships among different sectors of society, such as with business and non-governmental organizations.