

Earth Summit 2002 online debate at
www.lifeonline.org/debate:

**“ What should
Earth
Summit
2002
be trying to
achieve? ”**

Moderated by Jasmin Enayati
UNED Forum

September 2001

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DEBATE QUESTIONS

- How can cities be made part of a sustainable future? What are the key barriers, good models, roles and responsibilities involved in improving 21st century urban life? How should Earth Summit 2002 address this issue?
- How can marginalized people participate effectively in today's globalised world? What are the roles and responsibilities of key actors? What obstacles and processes should be addressed at Earth Summit 2002 to tackle this issue?
- HIV/AIDS is a great threat to sustainable development; how can multi-sectoral responses be developed to influence government policies and pharmaceutical companies on this issue? How can Earth Summit 2002 tackle the wider question of equitable health care?
- How can multi-national companies be influenced to adopt corporate citizenship and accountability for sustainable development? Who are the key actors and what are the main barriers? What strategies could Earth Summit 2002 develop to address this issue?

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www.lifeonline.org/debate:

'What should Earth Summit 2002 be trying to achieve?'

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● Purpose and structure of the debate

Ten years after the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio, the world's nations will gather again in Johannesburg next September to review progress and plan for the future. Preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development/Earth Summit 2002 are well under way, emphasising a transparent and participatory approach.

This electronic forum was aimed at initiating a focused and constructive public discussion on some of the priority issues. People were invited to share their ideas, knowledge and diverse perspectives.

The debate was part of www.lifeonline.org – a multi-media initiative exploring the impact of globalisation on the poverty and social development agenda of the Istanbul+5 meeting in June 2001, as well as the upcoming 10-year review of the 1992 Earth Summit. On the www.lifeonline.org website, maintained by OneWorld, you can watch webcasts of the *City Life* programmes, produced by TVE for BBC World; follow up the broadcasts by exploring the background to the various themes through web-links; related radio features produced by InterWorldRadio; a briefing paper on "Urban Governance" produced by Panos and you can read and download a series of briefing sheets on key international processes underpinning the *City Life* series produced by UNED Forum, and view the archives of the Earth Summit 2002 online debate.

The debate was publicised through the TVE *City Life* series, the www.lifeonline.org website, relevant listservers, the websites and databases of the *lifeonline* partner organisations and UNED Forum.

The debate took place for four weeks in September 2001, from 30th August to 30th Sept and was open for subscription during this time. Participants were asked to register with name, organisation and country to subscribe to the debate.

We had one topic per week. The moderator produced weekly summaries of each week's discussion which aimed at giving an impression of the arguments as they developed through the debate, using selections from the contributions. These summaries and the executive summaries for each week form the main content of this report.

● Moderation process

The debate was moderated by Jasmin Enayati, UNED Forum (www.unedforum.org) with support from *Lifeonline* partners One World, TVE, and PANOS.

The purpose of moderation was to keep the volume of material posted to a manageable size (10–15 messages per day), as well as to ensure observance of the ground rules. In addition to the ground rules, the criteria we considered were: relevance; substance of contributions; concreteness of argument; and constructive tone.

Thanks and acknowledgments

Thanks to all authors who contributed the initial articles for each week's debate, all the other participants for making this debate happen and putting their time and effort into this and the partner organisations from the lifeonline initiative.

On October 1st – World Habitat Day – Television Trust for the Environment (TVE) and its partners on the lifeonline project – UNED Forum, Panos, InterWorld Radio, One World and the Women's Feature Service – were awarded the Habitat Scroll of Honour for "promoting informed debate, new policies and practical solutions to the challenges of urban development." The World Habitat Day ceremonies took place in the city of Fukuoka, Japan. We would like to thank the United Nations Center for Human Settlements for this award.



The Lifeonline multimedia project is supported by the National Lotteries Charities Board.

To view the archives of the debates, please go to www.lifeonline.org/debate

To download the pdf or txt version of this report, go to www.earthsummit2002.org/es/life/default.htm

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sustainable cities

(29 August – 7 September 2001)



**How can cities be made part of a sustainable future?
What are the key barriers, good models, roles and responsibilities involved in improving 21st century urban life?
How should Earth Summit 2002 address this issue?**

Executive summary

Cities accommodate half the global population and have an enormous potential to be engines of economic growth and social development. By 2025, two-thirds of humanity will live in cities, and 90% of those will be in cities in developing countries. These are just some of the facts that served as a background for an intense debate on sustainable development in cities.

Urban sustainability is not just about the environment, but also about political, social, economic and cultural sustainability. Several contributions to the debate called attention to the political role of cities in promoting sustainability. There is a need for democracy, good governance and a value-based discussion in order to further sustainable urban development and to create a sense of people's ownership of the process. A lot of emphasis was given to the need for a strengthened participatory approach in decision-making. Greater responsiveness to the voices of common people will strengthen the sense of community. Also, environmental and economic requirements of development need to be better integrated. Key problems are related to resource management; lack of public transport networks inside major cities; and short-sighted development and planning processes. There was general agreement that our current unsustainable patterns of production and consumption are incompatible with a sustainable future.

Key barriers to achieving sustainable urban development were identified, such as inequity, infra-structural constraints, economic and political pressure, and a threat of ignoring lessons that have already been learnt during the last 10 years working with Agenda 21 programmes all over the world. Many contributors felt that there is a lack of national competence and political will to address the needs of cities.

Building upon the existing advantages of cities to make them more sustainable will require changes to the processes of government at all levels and of the industrial/commercial sector, as well as changes in the roles of community groups and organisations and the family unit. Ideas on how to overcome barriers were suggested, ranging from advancing lifelong environmental education, developing participative democratic decision-making processes that include all relevant stakeholders; increasing more strategic planning processes; heavily promoting public transport; stimulating innovation in recycling/resource recovery industries; focusing on the interdependence between the urban and rural area, seeking to develop regional entities that counteract the tendency for urban growth to overwhelm rural areas; developing an international benchmark system for sustainable cities, incl. environmental, educational and economic indicators to achieve measurable results and finally, initiating a more profound system of sharing knowledge and solutions between urban communities on a global scale.

Many examples of good practice were given. Roles and responsibilities of key actors in improving 21st century urban life were discussed, in particular the need to share responsibilities between all stakeholders in a spirit of cooperation. Contributors stressed the importance of environmental education as a way to involve and empower citizens and to achieve a sense of environmental stewardship and civic responsibility. Many contributors stressed the need for practical coalitions of cities.

Several constructive recommendations were made as to how the Earth Summit 2002 could ensure a balanced debate on the issue. Earth Summit 2002 must take the lead in democratizing governance structures and develop federated democratic institutions at all levels involving all stakeholders and taking account of their conflicting views. It is hoped that such institutions will decide the rights and responsibilities of stakeholders. The political conflict between national interests and urban needs should be addressed. Partnerships should be fostered involving the corporate world, for example by setting up cooperatives between the public and private sector. It is time to implement policies that integrate economical and environmental concerns. ●

● Background

David Hales, former US Government official, outlined some of the key problems:

"Few subjects in recent decades have generated as much heat and passion as that of the role of cities in the sustainability of our planet. Few subjects in recent years have caused so much divisiveness between the developed and the developing world as the role that cities are alleged to have played in compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs... More people live in cities today than lived in the entire world in 1950. By 2025, two-thirds of humanity will live in cities, and 90% of those will be in cities in developing countries. Of the three people born each second, two are born in cities. Unless we drastically change our patterns of investment, most of those children will never receive a formal education. Already, well more than 100 million children between the ages of six and 11 are not in school, and an additional 150 million have dropped out without acquiring basic levels of literacy. Most of these children are girls... .. of all the forces that characterize the beginning of the 21st century, none will have a more profound effect on human lives than the concentration of people and their activities in cities..."

(David Hales, former US Government official)

"Cities absorb massive quantities of resources and generate huge amounts of waste but they also accommodate half the global population and are engines of economic growth and social development, drawing in human resources and raw materials, which, coupled with urban infrastructure, have spurred industrial and commercial development almost everywhere..."

(Urban Secretariat, UNCHS)

● How can cities be made part of a sustainable future?

There is no sustainable development that does not address the needs of cities. Urban sustainability is not just about the environment, but also about political, social, economic and cultural sustainability. The complexity of urban life prescribes multi-disciplinary approaches.

Several contributions to the debate called attention to the **political role** of cities in promoting sustainability. There's a need for democracy, good governance and a value-based discussion in order to achieve sustainable urban development and people's ownership of the process.

"I think that for cities to be sustainable they need to be based on values, not necessarily monetary values but values of what is decent, human and environmentally responsible."

(John D. Liu, Environmental Communicator, China)

"I feel that building a sense of ownership and responsibility among the individual citizens of cities with regard to resource management, long term city planning etc is a key ingredient in any plan to make cities part of a sustainable future."

(Amanda, Australia)

"Since most sustainability issues cross political boundaries, systemic change in the structure of governments at all levels is a prerequisite to major change. Key to this change is creating both the reality and the perception that individual citizens can influence governments at all levels and governments are in return responsible to their citizens."

(Ray Jefferd, Canada)

"One must realize that the lack of consensus even in arriving at an acceptable definition of "sustainability" results from the absence of "democratic" governance structure. The key point is to develop a governance structure for all resources that will ensure intergenerational equity and a complimentary relationship between humans and nature. The existing "governance structures", be they at sub-national, national or international levels, are unfortunately not geared to ensure intra-generational equity and are based on a philosophy of development that rewards "capability" and "efficiency" in a competitive framework..."

...Lack of appropriate governance structures at the sub-national and national levels, resulting in poverty, hunger, malnutrition and unemployment. The "Washington Consensus" or the WTO agreements shape the "governance structure" at the international level — which are by no means helping reduction in inequality across nations."

(Milindo Chakrabarti, Director, CREATE, India)

A common thread in many contributions is the emphasis on a **participatory approach** in decision-making. Greater responsiveness to the voices of common people will strengthen the sense of community.

"Hierarchical systems should be displaced by more organic structures based on shared information and accepted protocols that allow local democracies to work synergistically through information and communication technologies."

(Don Scott Johnson, Citizens of Earth, USA)

"Everywhere government structures and electoral systems for the most part are out of sync with the times and the concerns of the citizens and are seriously lacking in democratic process."

(Ray Jefferd, Canada)

"By bringing citizens on board, countries can achieve sustainable urban life."

(Singy Hanyona, Network for Environmental Journalists (NEJ), Zambia)

"too little accountability for city leaders in terms of environmental action plans, unregulated unsustainable growth of cities, urbanization, no control mechanisms"

(Prateek, India)

"Democracy has not taken root in most of the societies in the world today, particularly in respect to international institutions of governance"

(Milindo Chakrabarti, Director, CREATE, India)

Several contributors pointed out that environmental and economic requirements of development need to be integrated.

The **planning stage** is key for integrating environmental and economic concerns:

"The planning of cities in an economical and environmental sense is imperative. Property Development will not happen unless it is economically viable to a developer. You cannot have property development without profit. The very real issue is therefore economical as well as environmental. The town planning stage is paramount to the long term sustainability of our cities as is the actual process of development."

(Sandra Hawke, Property Valuer, Australia)

Ecological footprint

"An urban ecological footprint of some disproportionate size cannot be avoided but, under the right policy conditions, it may exhibit positive, rather than negative long-term influences on rural economies and cultures ... the ecological footprint will always be joined, politically, by the complementary reality of the economic footprint. Cities have always been the driving force behind rural development, not the other way around."

(Urban Secretariat, UNCHS)

"The "economic footprint" is entirely dependent on the "ecological footprint". If we are eating up all of our planet's resources, there is nothing left to generate the economy. And, the fact that we are currently in overshoot, that is using more resources than the earth can regenerate in a year, suggests that economic growth – as long as that implies increased throughput of resources – is not a viable solution to our dilemma. Cities, therefore, rather than acting as engines of economic growth, need to act as engines of economic efficiency, generating innovative technologies that reduce resource use. Political, social, economic and cultural sustainability are all possible in the long run only if we are able to live within the means of nature. And conversely, increasing equity in all of these dimensions is probably critical to getting to that point."

(Kim Rodgers, Redefining Progress, Oakland, US)

● Key problems

Resource management

Any approach for working towards more sustainable cities will need to revolve around reducing resource inputs and waste outputs (eg, Ian Finlayson, The Community Builders, Inc., USA). The main problem is our current unsustainable pattern of production and consumption:

"Cities, i.e., – what they produce, what they consume, and the way they are formed and designed – contribute to unsustainability, whatever this term may mean. Many have bluntly argued that the production and consumption patterns of our cities and their physical forms are incompatible with a sustainable future."

(Prof Mathur, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, New Delhi, India)

"The volume of the [cities'] consumption of resources and production of waste has spiraled out of proportion with the Earth's capacities as a source and a sink."

(Dushko Bogunovich, Unitec Institute of Technology, New Zealand)

"There will need to be radical changes in the energy flows, urban form, and management processes of cities in order to adequately address the above questions and their associated challenges ... [as well as changes in] ... consumer attitudes, expectations, lifestyles and consumption patterns"

(Xavier Menage, Postgraduate Student, Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy, Australia)

Transport inside major cities

Public investments often favour private transport solutions instead of providing the infrastructure for long-term public solutions. This results in a vicious circle of greater car use, greater congestion and poorer quality of public transport and again in a global growing dependence on cars. The use of mass transportation should be increased and cities should be made more pedestrian and cyclist friendly.

"The personal car is a great problem in urban environments"

(Elaine Baker, Ireland)

"Pollution in cities results in Acute Respiratory Infections (ARI), particularly with children."

(Bhargavi Nagaraja, Development Journalist/Policy Analyst, India Civil Society Collective, India)

"New York: "Quality of life and safety of residents and tourists are threatened by the excessive amount of cars and trucks which constantly disobey driving and parking laws. Public transport subway and bus systems are inadequate for the huge amount of riders."

(Marie Samuel, Yachay Wasi, US)

Development and planning

Urban developments are often characterised by short-sighted design and planning processes:

"urbanization process underlies bureaucratic needs instead of taking into account environmental requirements, such as hydrogeological characteristics of soil, water and underground"

(Franco Cavalleri, Centro Studi Sviluppo Territorio, Italy)

"property development is integral part of the development process; however, there is a lack of proper cooperation/communication between property developers, local authorities and legislation"

(Sandra Hawke, Property Valuer, Australia)

"most cities have in the recent past adopted their planning and zoning ordinances based on research done in the 50's, 60's and 70's. These should have been reviewed more thoroughly with the intention of accommodating modern technology in construction, population explosion, environmental laws and social-demographical changes, social divisions and inequalities."

(John Ngunjiri, Kansas State University, USA)

● What are the key barriers?

"Perhaps the most important barrier to greater urban sustainability is inequity: too much wealth versus too much poverty. Each of these two extremes has considerable impacts on the global living environment in general and urban social, political, cultural and ecological environments in particular."

(Urban Secretariat, UNCHS)

Some of the key barriers to sustainable development in cities are waste generation, social stresses from overpopulation, poor planning, segregation, poor public transport networks.

Some other issues that had been discussed were political and economic pressures, infrastructural constraints in third world countries, the indebtedness of poor countries and corruption as key barriers to achieving sustainable urban development.

"I come from Pakistan. If this country could be freed from debt, then there would be a chance for sustainable development. Unawareness, unlawfulness, illiteracy, shortage of finances, lack of planning, corruption and poverty are the key barriers. Provision of basic needs, skills training, employment and opportunity would help in improving life in the 21st century."

(Babar Khurshid, General Secretary, Organisation of Pakistani Women in Development, Pakistan)

"Technology is placed before people: In Asia money invested in high-tech/info technology instead of greening cities, e.g. Bangalore, which was ranked among top 10 tech cities in the world traffic cops wear masks to endure air pollution"

(Bhargavi Nagaraja, Development Journalist/Policy Analyst, India Civil Society Collective, India)

It has been pointed out again and again – one of the key barriers to achieving sustainable urban life is **ignorance**:

"In almost every case, we have more knowledge than we employ. The key barrier to achieving sustainable development in cities is lack of national competence and will to address the problems of cities."

(David Hales, former US Government official)

"danger of ignoring lessons that have been learnt during the last 10 years of working with Local Agenda 21 programmes all over the world (see ANPED report on "Barriers to local sustainability at www.anped.org)"

(Chris Church, ANPED, Northern Alliance for Sustainability, UK)

One way to leave that ignorance behind us, is **education**:

"the ordinary citizens can be educated and thus empowered to say no to all items that cause degeneration of the environment. Thus the major role and responsibility will be on the citizens to safeguard the environment, a responsibility, which had been left to the government and highly misused."

(Huha Chege, Heinrich Boll Foundation Regional Office Nairobi, Kenya)

Chris Church (ANPED, UK) also pointed out that some governments are suggesting that the role of cities has already been discussed through the Habitat II process – "where it can be left to moulder".

● Good models/ideas to overcome barriers

Building upon the existing advantages of cities to make them more sustainable will require changes to the processes of government at all levels and of the industrial/commercial sector, as well as changes in the roles of community groups and organisations and the family unit. Measures and approaches for working towards sustainability may include:

- developing more participative democratic decision-making processes, where people are encouraged and empowered to contribute to and influence the decisions that effect their local communities, i.e. Local Agenda 21 to create new networks and links between different sectors of society;
- sustainability meetings among major stakeholders (developers including consultants, governments, legislative) could be facilitated through new educational programme run by public sustainability officers;
- planning and redeveloping more strategically;
- enhancing public services;
- increasing the extent of pedestrian areas;
- emphasising historic preservation;
- utilising environmental science for planning: *"urbanisation process should achieve a balance of the different loads burdening on the territory"*
(Franco Cavalleri, Centro Studi Sviluppo Territorio, Italy)
- incorporating guidelines for greater energy efficiency and water sensitive design principles in new buildings;
- shifting away from the dominant existing engineering paradigm that focuses on large centralised infrastructures, and which takes little account of the natural environment or ecological processes;

- addressing design issues (urban master planning, infrastructure engineering, architecture, landscape, construction). The subject of design is a dynamic, evolving, quasi-living entity: *"Sustainable cities are about sustainable design."*

(Dushko Bogunovich, Unitec Institute of Technology, New Zealand)

- heavily promoting public transport (mainly light/heavy rail services, complemented by bus feeder systems) so as to reduce automobile dependency; and enhancing traffic alternatives through new transport principles, eg "Dualmode" transport with less environmental impact and higher mobility – www.ruf.dk/cnn.doc;
- reducing energy consumption and greenhouse emissions by taking part in initiatives such as the "Cities against Climate Change" Campaign, and by strongly funding research into renewable energy sources;
- running public campaigns on good consumption practices and energy (Desiree, IMSA, Netherlands);
- moving towards smaller-scale solid/liquid waste management, and funding more research into this area;
- stimulating innovation in recycling/resource recovery industries; encouraging urban agriculture in public places, communal gardens, road verges, gardens etc and creating urban forests that could be integrated with urban food production, renewable energy, bio-remediation of urban waste and wood: *"The importance of green areas for the liveability of suburban areas is recognized today locally as well as internationally."*

(Brenda Bussche, Ministry of the Flemish Community, Flanders-Belgium)

"A variety of urban farming systems exist both within the inner city and in the peri-urban zones ... agriculture is able to turn urban organic waste and waste water into productive resources. Rather than disposing these "wastes" cities should create decentralised systems for treatment and re-use of these "wastes" in agriculture... Urban agriculture can play an important role in greening of the city and the maintenance of such green areas against squatting and degradation. In many cities we also see the mixing of agricultural production functions with recreational, educational or social functions."

(Henk de Zeeuw, Coordinator Resource Centre on Urban Agriculture and Forestry (RUAFA) www.RUAFA.org, the Netherlands)

- promoting more communal living patterns that move against existing trends;
- structuring fiscal policies so as to internalise environmental costs; for example establishing an "environmental levy, so that everyone would pay rather than just a committed portion of society who make an active effort to regenerate and protect."

(Paul Barratt, Landcare Queensland, Australia)

or heavier taxation of more polluting technologies;

- shifting the current paradigm from "the neo-classical model of economics to ecological economics wherein the economy is a subset of the environment." See, for example: The Baltimore Ecosystem Study www.ecostudies.org/bes/; Smart Growth and New Urbanism (www.smartgrowth.org and www.cnu.org)

(Ian Finlayson, The Community Builders, Inc. USA)

- paying greater attention to pricing policies as a means of enforcing more sustainable consumption patterns

Tim Worstall, TTE Metals, Portugal emphasized that it is multi-national capitalism that will act in the interest of sustainability as long as it will make profit: *"Capitalism contains its own resource limitation feedbacks ... when they get scarce, the price goes up, people use less"*

Many contributors suggest that we need to focus on **interdependence** between the urban and rural areas and consider cities in relation to the suburban and rural areas required to support them; we should try to blend natural and urban environments within the cities; fight urban sprawl by on the one hand attempting to refurbish the cores of the city and, on the other hand, seeking to develop regional entities that counteract the tendency for urban growth to overwhelm rural areas:

"Cities which blend natural and urban environments, pedestrian-friendly cities, inter-linked neighbourhoods which are planned as smaller communities within larger cities, efficient and accessible public transport networks, use of renewable and recycled materials in construction of new houses and business premises, use of natural energy resources."

(Juan Sebastian Mariz Chiline, Spain)

"There has to be a greater understanding and connection between rural productivity and urban consumption. The urban sector puts so much pressure on rural systems (water, food, open space, recreation,). Urban citizens, like me, need to understand the dependency we have on the rural areas and be better stewards of the land."

(Joaquin Murrieta-Saldivar, Sonoran Institute, Mexico-USA)

"it is important not to get trapped into just focusing on urban centres as isolated elements of sustainable management and evolution. Their place within the larger environmental, social and economic picture needs to be examined to take account of cross-boundary issues, eg energy use and global warming, and remain open to cross-border initiatives, eg water management, and opportunities for information sharing."

(Kumalie Elford, Student, Australian National University, Australia)

In order to achieve measurable results, many contributors urged for the creation of an **international benchmark system** for sustainable cities, incl. environmental, educational and economic indicators:

"set up regulations that would be reviewed continuously to stop the interplay of the various forces contributing to uncontrolled growth of cities, e.g. norms against pollution, waste disposal, traffic then followed by dissemination of according success stories"

(Prateek, India)

"I believe that the Earth Summit should address the issue of sustainable cities on the basis of integrated systems analysis (ISA) and population distribution patterns which need to be developed for each country. The most critical system is the population system as it impacts on water resources, land use planning and ecosystems. Sustainable cities need to be considered in conjunction with population systems and in relation to human perceptions of the future."

(Dr Soroczynski, Principal, Systems Analyses Consultants (NSW), Australia)

"The new set of European Common Indicators – Towards a local sustainability profile. Developed by a partnership of European towns and cities with the European Commission and city networks association, the 10 indicators are now being tested by over 90 municipalities right across Europe. They are highly integrated and based on a mixture of principles that ensure local, global, social, cultural, economic and environmental issues are incorporated. Details and methodologies are on the site www.sustainable-cities.org/indicators. An 11th Indicator, that is standardising Ecological Footprint methodologies is to be added to the trial."

(Martin Fodor, Bristol City Council, UK)

Such systems could facilitate **sharing of knowledge** and solutions between urban communities on a global scale; networking among the cities through exchanging of best practices needs to be enhanced. A virtual learning center at the global scale could be set up to make the infrastructure and contacts available to share best practice sustainable management.

"2002 Earth Summit builds on what has been learnt around the world since the Earth Summit in 1992... The focus should be on what has been learned, and how can we build on the best and most effective lessons learnt – and from those that didn't work to date ... we now live in an age where, as in this e-forum, we can pool our global knowledge."

(Brian Curtis, Acting Director State Strategic Planning, Department for Infrastructure and Planning, Australia)

● **Examples of good practice:**

- Johannesburg, South Africa, the host of next year's WSSD:
GreenHouse Project www.earthlife.org plans to build a "green" center in the Johannesburg inner city park that will not only showcase environmentally sound design and construction principles, but provide a home for environmental and social activists in Johannesburg.

(Melinda Swift, South Africa)

- "There are economies to be found in sharing, recycling, using natural and renewable building materials. By approaching housing as part of a community rather than as customers for developers, we may find that we can build more lasting and sustainable urban institutions. There are many pioneers building co-housing and eco communities all over the world and these ideas should be explored"

(John D. Liu, Environmental Communicator, China)

- Develop the concept of 'The City of the Future': "a small human settlement with a population of 25,000-50,000 or smaller. Other characteristics would include: (1) Single and multi-family homes that are energy and water self-sustaining; (2) Green paths along wooded areas and wetlands for pedestrians and cyclists; (3) Minimal use of motorized vehicles; (4) Home-based and community-based local businesses; (5) Organic local food production and distribution units; (6) Cooperative interethnic educational institutions; (7) Community-based health and safety institutions; etc."

(S. Diaz-Garcia, Faculty, Johns Hopkins University, USA)

- International Conference on Culture in the Sustainability of Cities:
"Kanazawa in Japan is looking at its rich cultural heritage in traditional arts and crafts and traditional built environment as one of the important means to revitalise its economy and to promote itself as a world city renowned for them. The Cultural Cities' Network (CCN) will be established as a network of cities interested in fostering sustainable urban culture and will be anchored in ISHIKAWA International Cooperation Research Centre (IICRC), Kanazawa, Japan."

(Nadarajah, Lecturer, Manickam, Malaysia)

- Curitiba, Brazil:
"transportation tokens were handed out that provided opportunity to people in favelas to earn money in two ways:
1. take organic garbage to farmers and exchange it for food.
2. take recyclable material to a site where they received money.
Apparently this cleaned up the rats in the favelas, provided income, and got people out of favelas to look for work."

(Dusty Becker, Professor, KS University, USA)

- Bhakatapur (a small city adjuncted with Kathmandu the capital city of Nepal):
"Ten years back the city was such a dirty and unmanaged place, but now it has changed entirely. This is not due to the additional infrastructural developments in the city, but with a good management practice adopted by the town development committee."

(Govinda R. Timilsina, Ph.D, Canada)

● Roles and responsibilities involved in improving 21st century urban life

One simple statement brings the complexity of that question to the point:

"Visionary leadership by public authorities, organizations and individuals is needed"

(Elaine Baker, Ireland)

How shall that be achieved? All stakeholders have their part to play. Many contributors stress the importance of lifelong **environmental education**, in order to involve and empower citizens in an effort to raise awareness of this process and to achieve a sense of environmental stewardship and civic responsibility:

"people must be taught about this issue and that it isn't someone else's matter, in another country with whatever problem to be solved. It touches each and everyone on this planet"

(Jessica Arango, Panama)

"I expect the role of civil society organizations and generally citizens to be more enhanced during the Earth Summit. It is also the duty of us all to educate our constituents on the relationship between their day-to-day activities and the environment."

(Huha Chege, Heinrich Boll Foundation Regional Office Nairobi, Kenya)

"A reassessment and modification of the existing teaching curriculum for primary, high school, and tertiary education will be required. Once sustainability principles and different 'world views' are provided to our young children in appropriate ways, and subsequently reinforced throughout the duration of school/university life, we can reasonably expect significant changes to take place."

(Xavier Menage, Postgraduate Student, Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy, Australia)

"Governments need to take leading role to educate people first and then change building standards. Future cities need to be much more compact where most people use efficient and cheap public transport. In order to achieve this objective "new houses" which should be compact and environmentally friendly need to be developed and accepted by the public."

(Dr Tad Soroczynski, (PhD), Systems Analyses Consultants, Australia)

10 years after Rio, the **role of governments** needs to be re-evaluated:

"we have to put more emphasis on the role of civil society, have more participation. NGOs should be more involved in decision making."

(Daniel Brisard, Fondation Haitienne Pour La Science, la Technologie, Haiti)

"Strong political leadership, motivation and dedication is the essence for action-oriented programmes"

(Tariq Bin Yousuf, Environmental Engineer, Dhaka City Corporation, Bangladesh)

Many contributors stress that we need practical coalitions of cities. **Local governments' preparations** for the Summit are well underway:

"I see the Summit as a unique opportunity for local sustainability efforts to be better understood and supported. Local governments, working in concert with their local partners, have made significant progress and have much to offer the global community through the Summit process."

ICLEI is coordinating a worldwide review process that will assess opportunities and recommend strategies for accelerated action for sustainable development at the local level ... ICLEI is facilitating the contributions to the Summit by local governments with endorsement from the UN Summit Secretariat, IULA and other associations. We hope to be able to involve all parties that are interested in the role of municipalities in achieving sustainable development."

The first significant stage of this process will come to fruition in November 2001, in North Vancouver, Canada, at the Local Government Preparatory Committee Meeting where the final report from the consultations will be endorsed (www.iclei.org/johannesburg2002)"

(Sean Southey, Secretary General, ICLEI (International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives), Canada)

Roles and responsibilities need to be shared by **all stakeholders**. The buzzwords are **co-operation, partnerships, participation and good governance**:

"there is a need for leadership by central governments and implementation by local authorities. Individuals need to be made aware that every incremental change they make is of value in the global context even though they may not see any direct local benefits from their actions."

(Blair Taylor Masefield, New Zealand)

"Strong partnerships that involve the equitable allocation of roles and responsibilities to all stakeholders in civil society and the private sector to promote active participation and ownership of new initiatives."

(Nadarajah, Lecturer, Manickam, Malaysia)

"As a governmental department ... we try to realise a sustainable combination of the recreational, environmental, economical and ecological roles that green areas fulfill, both in city centres and in the countryside. In order to achieve this we work together with other administrative departments and authorities, private owners, interest organisations and the public."

(Brenda Bussche, Ministry of the Flemish Community, Flanders-Belgium)

"The role of participation and the concept of decentralisation need to be re-defined. There is need to re-inforce the ideas of Resident Development Committees (RDCs) in urban cities. These committees must have local leadership representation, with constitutions that are drawn by communities themselves."

(Singy Hanyona, Network for Environmental Journalists (NEJ), Zambia)

To sum up these different views, the Earth Summit 2002 must take the lead in democratizing **governance** structures. There's a need to develop federated democratic institutions at all levels involving all stakeholders and taking account of their conflicting views. It is hoped that such institutions will decide the rights and responsibilities of stakeholders.

● How should Earth Summit 2002 address this issue?

The Earth Summit 2002 should address the **political conflict** between national interests and urban needs:

"conscious effort has to be made to force countries to respond to their Habitat Agenda commitments, and include on their delegations those who work daily with the challenges of the urban..."

... For the Earth Summit to address the urban challenge, we must have a strong Urban Caucus of participants, official delegates and otherwise, mayors and elected local leaders must speak out clearly, and there must be a strong voice for women."

(David Hales, former US Government official)

Another proposal to strengthen the global solidarity of cities was a: **"Declaration of Interdependence"**:

"... a global coalition of cities that would further be organized into national coalitions within each country with the purpose of:

- increasing the political influence of cities on national and foreign policies.*
- strengthening democracy within cities*
- mandating higher levels of civic responsibility from large corporations through solidarity of city and local governments."*

(Don Scott Johnson, Citizens of Earth, USA)

Partnerships should be fostered involving the **corporate world**. One suggestion involves setting up "new cooperatives" between the public and private sector:

"When the cities need "public" and "private", the alternative would be "new cooperative"... The Summit 2002 therefore should define the ultimate objectives of cooperation."

(Tjahjokartiko Gondokusumo, Chairman, CHP Cooperative, Jakarta, Indonesia)

"It is time to IMPLEMENT policy that integrates economical and environmental concerns... The integration between government and private enterprise is imperative if we wish to achieve sustainability in every sense of the word"

(Sandra Hawke, Property Valuer, Australia)

Other **recommendations** to ensure a balanced debate include:

"The Earth Summit 2002 must re-think its motivation and agenda, putting in more personalities and participation from Third-World nations, being underwritten by the G-7 Group."

(Allan Fortuna, Philippines)

"How did the urban environment get on the agenda at Rio in 1992? Because we (cities, NGOs, city organizations, multilateral agencies, donors, etc.) worked together to raise the profile of cities. This included organizing a high-profile conference in Curitiba prior to the Earth Summit, preparing publications, holding events and lobbying at the Summit itself. So, two modest proposals:

- a) Individually, we should participate in the various PrepComms and other events leading up to Rio+10 to raise issue of urban sustainability, and*
- b) Collectively, we should organize a major urban/environmental event just prior to Rio+10 in a South African city with a commitment to sustainability, e.g. Cape Town."*

(Josef Leitmann, Senior Urban Planner, World Bank, Brazil)

"In May 2002, UNCHS (Habitat) is scheduled to hold an Urban Forum to discuss the issues of cities and urban sustainability, in reference to Chapter 7 of Agenda 21, as a preparatory meeting for the Johannesburg Summit."

(The Urban Secretariat, United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat))

Initial contributions

Two key actors contributed the initial articles for the debate:

David Hales, former US Government official, directed the environmental and urban programs of the US Agency for International Development from 1994 to 2001, and headed the US delegations to Habitat/UNCHS during that time;

Prof. Om Prakash Mathur, HDFC Chair in Housing and Urban Economics, National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, India

marginalization

(10–14 September 2001)



How can marginalized people participate effectively in today's globalised world? What are the roles and responsibilities of key actors? What obstacles and processes should be addressed at Earth Summit 2002 to tackle this issue?

Executive summary

There is a widespread political unwillingness to let the poor and marginalized communities participate in decision-making processes, on any level. Even on the most local level, elites usually dominate the process. Most examples of marginalisation are the result of a long-term lack of participation of communities in their local communities and globalisation further adds to this deficit. Participation cannot be a substitute for democracy but it is the best vehicle to further enhance democracy. The will to further expand the concepts of good governance and decentralization, as set up at the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992 and to develop an enabling environment for informed participation is largely missing.

This perceived lack encouraged many, from North and South, to engage in an intense debate on some of the key problems with regard to this issue: there is a need for good governance, transparency and systematic processes of participation and the rehabilitation of the regulatory role of governments. Many contributors agreed that the dominant economic system cannot be sustained in the long-term. The causal economic links between abundant, wasteful consumerism and exploitation/marginalisation of the poorest, is still very little understood and/or ignored by consumers in the countries that consume the most. Current patterns of exploitation need to be replaced by patterns of co-operation. A system of good governance must offer poor people a place to rise to. Therefore, a main strategy in de-marginalization is the creation of a broad middle class that is accessible through education and work.

Some of the key barriers to achieving more inclusive strategies were discussed, like the effects of globalisation and our dominant economic structures on marginalized communities: the many dimensions of globalisation in terms of its impact on the lives of the poor need to be fully understood. A discussion of participation needs to look at decreasing state control, the issue of hegemony and market domination by multinationals. Many contributors pointed out that elitism and the technicality of discourses that dominate the decision-making processes, on both the global and the most local level also contribute to exclusion.

Several examples of good models and ideas on how to overcome these barriers were suggested, such as the further development of multi-stakeholder processes: different sections of society are related to resources in different ways; such relationships often are in conflict with one another. Relevant conflict resolution mechanisms that will put self-imposed constraints on the resource users and ensure sustainable use of the resources need to be devised. To achieve such objective, it is imperative to ensure a democratic negotiation process including all relevant stakeholders to reduce and gradually wipe out the areas of conflict. Other models included the "Culture of Peace" program in which educational materials and activities could assist in the development of changes required to empower the disenfranchised.

Roles and responsibilities of key actors were discussed: to balance the weight of responsibilities, democratic structures have to be strengthened and the means needed to undertake such responsibilities need to be provided; democratic structures at local and international level need to be established and strengthened; partnerships between the North and South have to be consolidated. A better education system will enable people to participate more effectively in decision-making processes: education will enable marginalised communities to become aware of their role and can help to transform them into agents of change. Education of civil society will enable people to understand their role in positively influencing the lives and livelihoods of marginalized communities. Also, the media have the responsibility to provide democratic public information.

Recommendations were made as to how Earth Summit 2002 should address the issue: the conflict between environment and development priorities that takes place in sustainable development needs to be taken into account; examples of good practice should be highlighted and technological capacities should be strengthened. International environmental governance coming out of Earth Summit 2002 should reflect mechanisms of public access to information and of participation, making the process more accessible and meaningful to the public. ●

● Initial remarks

"Nothing will be sustainable without a culture of peace"

(Mitchell Gold, International Association of Educators for World Peace, Canada)

During the week of this debate, we witnessed the terrorist attacks on the US. You will find references to the events in some of the contributions that were written afterwards. For many the question was how to transform the violence into some meaningful ways of working on sustainable development and social justice.

The topic of marginalisation allowed for some reflections on the events, which Derk Loorbach (Researcher, Maastricht University, Netherlands) summarised as follows:

"Several global developments are coming together and emphasizing the need for radical change. Pollution, terrorism, poverty and inequality are major problems and they can result in a further polarisation of this world, including military conflicts or devastating ecological changes. We have to give people (poor and rich) more influence in their immediate environment and surrounding. This can only be done by re-evaluating the position of the so-called 'first world'. When western countries and their multinationals understand that their practices have contributed (to use an understatement) to the present situation of inequality, they will realise that they have to change their policies dramatically to be able to prevent terror like we've seen in Washington and New York."

● Keypoints

Lack of political will

The exclusion of poor people in the decision-making process on any level is foremost due to a widespread political will to exclude. Dr Barbara Gemmill, Environment Liaison Centre International, Kenya & Harsh Jaitli, PRIA, India and other contributors agree on that.

Need for transparency and systematic processes of participation

"Participation is not a substitute to Western democracy. To be effective, it must include both transparency with regards to the economic choices and the impact those will have on the life of citizens (particularly the poorest) as well as the rehabilitation of the regulatory role of the state, not the market."

(Dr Magdi Ibrahim, ENDA Maghreb, Morocco)

"Indigenous and poverty stricken people are only able to participate in the growing world economy through organised meetings, groups and set agendas based in the marginalized communities."

(Andrea Powell, yAIDS, EcoLogic, USA)

"Most examples of marginalisation are the result of long-term lack of participation of communities in their localities and globalisation adds to this deficit... There needs to be a long-term commitment to developing new ways of organization, community education and mobilization that helps people locally to project their needs and aspirations globally."

(Sheela Patel, Society for the Promotion of Area Resources)

Many contributors point out that none of us can afford the dominant **economic system** in the long-term. This issue needs further examination.

Participation is the best vehicle to enhance democracy:

"For poor people to have a real and effective voice in decision-making processes, we will have to stand the current world order on its head." In this new service orientated knowledge economy there is little space for the poor, as Thomas Kocherry, leader of the fisher people in India, states: "Globalisation is about the free movement of capital but not the free movement of labour".

(Kalpana Sharma, Deputy Editor of "The Hindu", India)

"... in today's hegemonous capitalist world system, as mega-corporate structures of economic and political power assume center stage, we start experiencing a new pattern emerging" – the disenfranchisement of the working class, the middle class, the intellectuals. Without a political voice, all of us are ... becoming the 'wretched of the earth'. None of us can afford fossil fuel driven economies, mega cities, toxic foods, polluted water & air, deculturalisation, alienation etc."

(S. Diaz-Garcia, Faculty, Johns Hopkins University, USA)

"The direct economic links between abundant consumerism and gross exploitation/marginalisation of the poorest, is least understood by consumers in the countries that consume the most – the USA leads the world in both wasteful consumption and in consumer's utter ignorance of the direct causal link between their consumption and grotesquely inhumane exploitation of poor people throughout the world. Above all we must remove the economic patterns of exploitation and replace them with patterns of co-operation."

(Don Scott Johnson, Citizens of Earth, US)

"Globalization must protect the interests of poor people."

(Olivier Kambala, Co-ordinator, International Center for Peace in Central Africa, DR Congo)

Good governance

"The problem is that change takes time, while retaining the status quo is instantaneous... Any system of good governance must offer people a realistic hope that they can rise out of poverty, which is almost always a structural part of an economy (hence, the almost universal systemic marginalization of the poor). To become un-poor, the poor must have a place to rise to. Therefore, a main strategy in de-marginalization is the creation of a broad middle class that is open and accessible to the poor through education and work. National policies that favour expansion of the middle class may be as pro-poor as any direct intervention in the slums."

(Jay Moor, UNCHS, Kenya)

● Key barriers

The key barrier to achieving more inclusive strategies lie with the effects that globalisation and **economic structures** have on marginalised communities:

"... those with political and economic power find the poor an inconvenience. It is difficult to persuade them to work towards solutions that open up spaces for the marginalized in the new economies governing cities around the world... The days when cities were manufacturing centers are over. Today, you need either capital or specialized knowledge to survive and succeed. And the poor have neither."

(Kalpana Sharma, Deputy Editor of "The Hindu", India)

"... unless we understand fully its [globalisation's] many dimensions in terms of its impact on the lives of the poor, strategies such as 'inclusiveness' appear to be like band-aid on a gaping wound... For consultation does not alter the harsh reality of economics"

(Kalpana Sharma, Deputy Editor of "The Hindu", India)

"Institutionalised participation which does not address the real issues of market domination and hegemony. – Decreasing state control as the management of public utilities shifts to market regulation rules via multinationals."

(Dr Magdi Ibrahim, ENDA Maghreb, Morocco)

"Poverty – but not simply lack of wealth. Education – but not simply lack of access to schools or literacy. We need to understand the complexities of what it is that marginalizes people. Perhaps the underlying problem is of scale. Not everyone can participate in large scale government, whereas at a very local level even the poorest and uneducated can contribute to shape their immediate surroundings."

(Michael Saunby, Futurologist, Teachmore, UK)

Many contributors point out that **elitism and the technicality of discourses** that dominate the decision-making processes, on both the global and the most local level contribute to exclusion:

"In global fora, the "forms of discussion, the language, the abstraction at which discussion takes place all exclude the poor, their local and even recently emerging global networks."

(Sheela Patel, Society for the Promotion of Area Resources)

Harsh Jaitli, India agrees in saying that issues related to environment are projected as complicated, loaded with technical jargon. It has become a challenge for NGOs and community groups to work within the boundaries of these external agencies over which none of us have any control.

● Good models/ideas to overcome barriers

Multi-stakeholder processes

"Change the very basis of relationships from "efficiency through competition" to "efficiency through cooperation". Different sections of society are related to the resources in different ways. Very often such relationships are in conflict with one another. The need of the hour is to devise relevant conflict resolution mechanisms in a " (true) democratic spirit". Such mechanisms will put self-imposed constraints on the resource users and ensure sustainable use of the resources. To achieve such objective it is imperative to

- a) appreciate the existence of multiple stakeholders in respect of any resource in particular and the resource system as a whole,
- b) identify them, and
- c) ensure a democratic negotiation across the stakeholders to reduce and gradually wipe out the areas of conflict.

This process is known as "multi-stakeholder process" in the present day literature. It is now well known that UNED Forum has done a considerable amount of homework in concretizing the concept (see UNED Forum's website on multi-stakeholder processes at www.earthsummit2002.org/msp)."

(Milindo Chakrabarti, Director, Create, India)

Along the same lines, Jayakumar (Thanal Conservation Action and Information Network, India) suggests to create mechanisms and social process that can bring the marginalised to the mainstream of activities:

"Clarify the theoretical framework and implications of marginalisation and then solutions will emerge... To me the solution is informed decision-making and the biggest limitation is the motivation to participate. Somehow everything around us from stories/news and advertisement give the message that change is impossible and difficult. The campaign ahead is on how much each of us will succeed to convince others that change is possible and the solution to most of the problems lies in changing practices and values."

The **Culture of Peace** Program, educational materials and activities could assist in the development of the changes required to empower the disenfranchised (Mitchell Gold, International

Association of Educators for World Peace, Canada).
See, for example: <http://www.geocities.com/iaewptest/presentation/cup.html> and <http://www.homeplanet.org>

"A strong network of friendship between all humans in this world – this is what we need and this is what we'll use to make the world better. The main responsibility is to help people in building this network of friendship."

(Reyhan, High school student, Azerbaijan)

Micro-credit programmes

"The micro-credit program that has been taken up by several NGOs is an enthusiastic approach for making the poor self-reliant should be linked with capacity building program."

(Tariq Bin Yousuf, Environmental Engineer, Bangladesh)

Earth Charter

"Adopt the Earth Charter which defines objectives around which we can organize efforts to eliminate poverty, change patterns of consumption and production and reduce exploitation. Press for legislation that mandates the printing of an 'economic justice ratio' tag on all products."

(Don Scott Johnson, Citizens of Earth, US)

In-depth coverage of complex problems by **mass media** should be supported in an organized way:

"In Tampa, Florida, the coverage of the World Conference on Racism, by Democracy Now, was in depth, passionate and emotionally powerful – such programming needs to be the rule rather than the exception. We need to seize every opportunity to expand public media outlets that amplify the voice of the people directly – WMNF radio station 88.5 in Tampa is a wonderful example."

(Don Scott Johnson, Citizens of Earth, US)

● Roles and responsibilities

Reflecting on roles opened the question of how to **balance** the weight of responsibilities:

"Participation is double edged – while it invites the various players from civil society to take part in the decision-making process, it also shifts a greater share of the responsibilities upon them without providing the means to undertake such responsibilities."

(Dr Magdi Ibrahim, ENDA Maghreb, Morocco)

Democratic structures at local and international level need to be established and strengthened:

"We need processes, which create an enabling environment for people's participation ... including the percolation of information to common people. We need processes, which recognize people's experiences and value their knowledge."

(Harsh Jaitli, PRIA, India)

"21st century democracies must make an effort to decentralize and demilitarize; to create small scale economies that include environmental, cultural and labour capital as assets, and to establish strong community and local governance."

(S. Diaz-Garcia, Faculty, Johns Hopkins University, USA)

Dr Barbara Gemmill, Kenya; Judy Imbanga, Indigenous Information Network, Kenya and other contributors agree that this can be achieved by listening to the marginalized people in their own environments:

"... opportunities for public comment and public access to information are important tools; mechanisms need to be built in at the local level to ensure this."

Most international advocacy processes need long-term linkages with local activism. There needs to begin an "examination at a global level of the kinds of spaces that need to be created for dialogue" and participatory democratic strategies, because these will begin to open local spaces and facilitate new participation and inclusion rituals. Trends in global development investment seem to make larger commitments to poverty and marginalisation, yet lesser attention is paid to creating robust institutions that will sustain participation of marginalized groups."

(Sheela Patel, Society for the Promotion of Area Resources)

Consolidate **partnership between North and South**

"There are a growing number of NGOs based in the North who give technical skills and funding to marginalized groups all over the world, ... supporting education, capacity building and training in trade, finance and globalisation in terms of how it could work for them. I think that having the backing from NGOs in the North who can help financing but having the organizational base in the marginalized community is the best way to achieve a solid front to globalisation."

(Andrea Powell, yAIDS, EcoLogic, US)

Role of **governments**

"Marginalization can be addressed by getting on with reform: good macroeconomic policies, sensible budget priorities, privatization, transparency in government, a judicial system that can enforce the rule of law, democracy, and reduction of barriers to trade and investment."

(Thomas L. Hutcheson, Macroeconomic Advisor, USAID/Nigeria)

Education is key in relation to effective participation of marginalised people. Education will enable marginalised people to become aware of their role and can help to transform them into "agents" of change. Education of civil society will enable people to understand their role in positively influencing the lives and livelihoods of marginalized communities.

"Education is not only a human right it is also a precondition for achieving sustainability and to ensure marginalised people's participation in the global debate. Through education people create individual and collective awareness of social change, democratic rights and environmental issues. Education and knowledge is linked to power. Lack of education has through time always been used to suppress poor and marginalised people and this has not been changed with the process of globalisation."

(Morten Blomqvist, Ibis, Denmark)

"Capacity-building is necessary to enable the marginalised to take charge of their socio/economic "development" – to become participators in the process of change rather than victims of change. This will lead to the understanding, skills and confidence necessary to engage in the discussion and decision-making and also enable them to engage in, and benefit from the implementation of these decisions."

(Peter Martin, WWF, UK)

"in most cases marginalization happens because of the lack of awareness, training, accessibility, poverty, institutional capacities of governments and NGOs and simple tradition of decision-making systems. Therefore, with [continuous] practice, the participatory approach might become the new tradition."

(Dr Iyad Abumoghli, Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP, Jordan)

Role of **technology and the media**

"... use advances in technology to communicate and organize across every kind of border... Also the media should take responsibility to provide democratic public information throughout the world. We need to organize and demand in-depth coverage of real human stories rather than put up with regurgitated mindless babble of corporations and politicians."

(Don Scott Johnson, Citizens of Earth, US)

● **How should Earth Summit 2002 address this issue?**

Address the conflict between environment and development priorities that takes place in sustainable development:

"Poverty often puts the poor as abusers in the limelight, and the victims become the perpetrators of crimes that larger global systems set up, making it easier for the poor to be further victimized"

(Sheela Patel, Society for the Promotion of Area Resources)

A more thorough understanding of the **basic framework** will eventually result in a different approach:

"Johannesburg will be an opportunity for us all to state which commitments and what means are necessary for civil society to fully play its role... To be credible and reach beyond the simple dream, participation must be based on several frameworks adapted to the specific aspects of each society... All players should be able to call out for a referee should the commitments remain unfulfilled."

(Dr Magdi Ibrahim, ENDA Maghreb, Morocco)

"The right questions need to be asked – not 'how should we help the marginalized' – but 'how should we stop marginalizing', we should not ask 'how should we help the poor', but 'how to eliminate poverty', and most of all we should ask 'how do we transform the patterns of economy from exploitation to cooperation?'"

(Don Scott Johnson, Citizens of Earth, US)

Best practice

"Earth Summit 2002 could be a good platform to highlight the achievements of the common people. This will not only provide recognition but motivate the rest of us to take up similar initiatives... Rather than projecting the depressing picture, we should try to bring achievements of poor people to the global arena."

(Harsh Jaitli, PRIA, India)

Environmental governance

"International environmental governance coming out of the Earth Summit 2002 should reflect such mechanisms [of public access to information/of participation], making the process more accessible and meaningful to all the public."

(Dr Barbara Gemmill, Environment Liaison Centre International, Kenya)

"Form an integral agenda and forms of sharing and dialogue ... we need to underline that not single positions but the concert of aspects and views form a greater whole."

Review and include existing institutions like the UIA (www.uia.org) or the Network of worldwide projects (<http://benking.de/radio-bridge-overseas.htm>)"

(Heiner Benking, Millenium Project, Germany)

Build technological capacities

"Earth Summit should support technological empowerment. Support indigenous technologies, support small and medium industries, which employ more people in poor countries, and design packages that address poverty and unemployment."

(Martin Marani, Industrial Ecology Institute, Kenya)

"I suggest to make this phrase the criterion of this Summit: 'Everything you do today is to prepare you for something better tomorrow'"

(Reyhan, High school student, Azerbaijan)

Initial contributions

Five key actors contributed the initial articles for the debate:

Barbara Gemmill, Environment Liaison Centre International, Kenya.

Magdi Ibrahim, ENDA Maghreb, Morocco;

Harsh Jaitli, Society for Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA), India;

Sheela Patel, Society for the Promotion of Area Resources (SPARC);

Kalpana Sharma, Deputy Editor of The Hindu, one of India's largest English language dailies;

HIV/AIDS

(17 – 21 September 2001)



HIV/AIDS is a great threat to sustainable development; how can multi-sectoral responses be developed to influence government policies and pharmaceutical companies on this issue? How can Earth Summit 2002 tackle the wider question of equitable health care?

Executive summary

In the last twenty years, over twenty million people have died from HIV/AIDS. Another thirty-six million are living with the virus and every year at least another five million become infected. While many aspects of HIV are shared with other diseases – such as the fact it is sexually transmitted and if untreated is inevitably fatal – AIDS presents a unique challenge to sustainable development in the twenty-first century.

Two points characterised this week's debate. First of all, we have to think about the HIV/AIDS epidemic not merely in terms of a disease but in terms of a behavioural issue. And, we need to consider the interdependence between the HIV pandemic and development dynamics: migration, the impact on skilled labour, health costs, economic impacts, food security, etc.

The two areas of prevention and accessibility of treatment are of particular concern. Contributors agree that successful prevention of HIV infection is a highly complex issue, relating social, cultural, economic, psychological and behavioural factors, with poverty and gender as the main issues. To tackle this interplay, a comprehensive approach is required, involving an integrated public and private sector response and including religious institutions and NGOs. This implies to disseminate information about the transmission of the virus and to instigate inclusive debate, analysing the diverse factors underlying sexual behaviour, which should involve policymakers, the media, those working in HIV/AIDS care and prevention and, above all, affected individuals and communities.

The issue of treatment opened the question of global guidelines on intellectual property rights, as outlined in WTO's TRIPS agreement which regulates the export of drugs: patent protection must be given by all WTO countries to pharmaceutical products. Patents accord a market monopoly to the patent holder by preventing anyone except the patent holder to market the patented invention. Consequently, prices can be set according to what the market will bear. A package of measures to keep prices for essential medicines affordable was suggested, including cooperation with patent holder which could lead to voluntary licensing to allow for local production of essential medicines; employ legal safeguards which allow for import of drugs through compulsory licensing; support public health measures in the TRIPS agreement; develop distinctive provisions for developing and developed countries.

Following on from that some of the key barriers to achieving a multi-sectoral approach to the AIDS epidemic were identified; including specific barriers, like the provision of particular goods (e.g. condoms, clean needles) to more general requirements, such as empowerment of women; provision of adequate food, water and shelter; and the protection of both those who are HIV positive and those vulnerable to infection from discrimination and stigma. Organised religions, whose opposition to the promotion of condoms and to the rights of those whose behavior they disapprove of was also identified as a major barrier to effective HIV prevention. Equitable access to health care depends on a large-scale reallocation of global resources – the basis for which is a value system that is based on just and equitable principles.

Several examples of good models for overcoming barriers were suggested, such as setting up a "Season of AIDS awareness"; examining the role of culture; and reflecting on the positive role religion could play in giving people motives for behavioural change.

Recommendations for Earth Summit 2002 included:

- strengthen the link with the existing international process on HIV/AIDS; look at the recent United Nations Declaration on HIV/AIDS and what it omits to say;
- encourage governments to take decisions that favour young people who are particularly troubled due to abuse of drugs and alcohol, unemployment, sex work, etc.
- further establish a multi-sectoral approach, including multi-stakeholder partnerships in the fight against the HIV/AIDS epidemic, for developing policies but, in particular, for the implementation of agreements. ●

● Background

Two points characterised the debate of this week. First of all, we have to think about the HIV/AIDS epidemic not merely in terms of a disease but in terms of a behavioural issue. And, we need to consider the interdependence between the HIV pandemic and any number of development dynamics: migration and population movement, the impact on skilled labor, health costs, economic impacts, food security, etc.:

"In the last twenty years, over twenty million people have died from HIV/AIDS. Another thirty-six million are living with the virus and every year at least another five million become infected. While many aspects of HIV are shared with other diseases – such as the fact it is sexually transmitted and if untreated is inevitably fatal – AIDS presents a unique challenge to sustainable development in the twenty-first century. Two areas in particular are of concern: how to reduce the rate of transmission and how to make treatment widely accessible."

(Martin Foreman, Panos Institute, UK)

● Key issues and ways to tackle them

Prevention

All contributors agree that successful prevention of HIV infection is a very complex issue, involving social, cultural, economic and psychological factors:

"Provision of health care is both a human right and a prevention tool; for example, reducing the prevalence of other sexually transmitted diseases reduces HIV transmission rates, as does provision of care for HIV/AIDS itself."

*Reducing transmission rates mostly depends on **changing sexual behaviour**. However, how often people have sex, who they have sex with and whether they use a condom is determined by a wide range of social, cultural, economic and psychological factors, with **poverty** and **gender** in the forefront. As a general rule, women who lack economic independence – most women in the developing world – frequently find themselves in sexual situations that they would not otherwise choose. These can range from a one-time encounter in exchange for money, services, "gifts" or shelter through longterm relationships as mistress or "babymother" to lifelong marriage. Unsurprisingly, many men – some knowingly, others unwittingly – take advantage of women's availability..."*

(Martin Foreman, Panos Institute, UK)

A multi-sectoral, comprehensive approach is fundamental, involving an integrated public and private sector response and including religious institutions and NGOs.

Most importantly, this means to instigate a **widespread and inclusive debate**:

"providing an analysis of the social, economic and other factors underlying sexual behaviour, and engendering widespread debate as to the best way of respond to the epidemic. Such debate should involve policymakers, the media, those working in HIV/AIDS care and prevention and, above all, those individuals and communities most affected. This last group is the greatest challenge, because they are often the women and men whose lack of education, poverty, behaviour etc has forced them to the margins of society."

And also to **disseminate information** about the transmission of the virus:

"wide range of information campaigns directed at different audiences (eg targeting men and women separately, according to age, socio-economic background etc), opportunities for those at risk to discuss prevention messages, provision of voluntary counselling and testing with basic treatment options, poverty reduction strategies for vulnerable groups and legal and political initiatives that tackle basic gender inequalities."

(Martin Foreman, Panos Institute, UK)

*"Effective prevention requires an end to government and religious **hypocrisy** about sex and drugs. "Information campaigns" (a weak phrase) only work when they speak honestly, realistically and non-judgmentally about behavior. As long as most of the world's governments refuse to recognise the existence of homosexuality, drug use and sex work in their countries, and seek to brand anyone who engages in these practices as deviant and criminal, prevention efforts cannot work..."*

(Dennis Altman, LaTrobe University, Australia)

Access to HIV treatment

How to ensure a better quality of life for people living with HIV/AIDS

"Lowering the viral load and delay the progress of the disease are two basic objectives of this treatment, but prices are so high for almost all people with HIV infection. Who pays? Government is sick of bureaucracy. NGOs are too weak to respond to PWA [people with AIDS] needs ... what happens with the rest of these people [that have no social security due to unemployment, eg in Mexico this group accounts for 40% of PWA]? One part has access to treatment through local NGOs. Self-help groups are doing so much to reduce the stigma of infection increasing a sense of community and providing sensible treatment and support. Such self help groups may be an ideal vehicle for drug distribution which is likely to be more effective and equitable than that which can be provided by many present health care systems crumbling under the burden of many infectious diseases... UNAIDS said ... "People with HIV/AIDS require comprehensive support, and not just medicines"

(Francisco Rosas, Consultant, Independent Consultant, Mexico)

Global Guidelines on Intellectual Property Rights

(outlined in WTO's TRIPS agreement which regulates the export of drugs)

Setting prices globally in line with those prevailing in the developed countries can prevent access to essential medicines for the poor. Please see Dr Hamied's contribution, quoted nearly in full length, which explains the implications of the TRIPS agreement:

"Under TRIPS, patent protection must be given by all WTO countries to pharmaceutical products. Patents lead to long-term monopoly and are essentially "restrictive" whereas WTO stands for FREE TRADE. Patents prevent anyone except the patent holder to market the patented invention. Consequently, patents accord a market monopoly to the patent holder, who, free from market competition, can set prices according to what the market will bear, different in different countries but invariably as high as the market will accept."

Pricing policies

*"The prices of essential medicines including those required for HIV/AIDS can be kept reasonable and affordable through a **package of measures** that include:*

- 1. voluntary co-operation with the patent holder can lead to voluntary licensing and technological transfer which will allow local production of essential medicines. Where this is not forthcoming, the present TRIPS agreement includes legal safeguards which allow countries to produce or import drugs of their choice through compulsory licensing or parallel import at lower prices offered elsewhere on the world market.*
- 2. It is essential and imperative that the developing and least developed countries be able to use these safeguards to the fullest extent possible. They will then be able to provide positively towards the health and welfare of their population including major diseases such as HIV/AIDS etc.*
- 3. It is also important that the international community (ie) the developed countries, in particular those attending the WTO Ministerial Conference in November 2001 in Qatar should in turn strongly support the public health measures in the present TRIPS agreement to allow developing and least developed countries to use these safeguards freely without fear of trade retaliation.*
- 4. Based on the above, perhaps the developing and least developed countries should be given an additional 10 years to abide by and fully comprehend the TRIPS provisions. These are by themselves not clear and need careful interpretation.*
- 5. Perhaps there will be a more positive development post November 2001 of having separate and distinctive provisions and guidelines within TRIPS – TRIPS North for the developed countries and TRIPS South for developing and least developed countries."*

(Dr Yusuf K Hamied, Director of Cipla Ltd, India)

Another key issue that was suggested is further debt cancellation (coupled with improvement in health services).

Key barriers to achieving a multi-sectoral approach to the AIDS epidemic

*"The barriers to sustainable and effective responses to HIV/AIDS are both specific and general, meaning that they range from the **provision of particular goods** (eg. condoms; clean needles; therapeutic drugs) to more **general requirements** such as the empowerment of women, adequate food, water and shelter, and the protection of both those who are HIV positive and those vulnerable to infection from discrimination and stigma."*

(Dennis Altman, LaTrobe University, Australia)

*"... the main reason ... is the **unmitigated greed** that continues to be contest in the battle of sustainable vs. unsustainable development. With so much money having been made during the last decade, if the rich people would have simply given more of their money to the people who actually know how to improve the lives and livelihoods of the poor people, maybe we could have mitigated some of the frustration, hopelessness and anger that is at the root of the branch whose thorn deeply pierced the United States last Tuesday."*

(Don Edwards, Justice and Sustainability Associates, US)

Certain lessons can be learnt from Brazil, which has been able to provide a full range of anti-retroviral drugs to the majority of its citizens with HIV and countries such as Thailand, Uganda, Senegal and Cambodia. However, a simple duplication of "success stories" in the fight against HIV/AIDS would be very difficult to achieve for the very poor countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, where the rate of infection is far higher.

*"organised **religions**, whose opposition to the promotion of condoms and to the rights of those whose behavior they disapprove of is the major barrier to effective HIV prevention. This applies equally to rich and poor countries; religious hypocrisy has harmed HIV prevention in the United States as much as in Egypt and the Philippines; "Equitable access to health care" depends upon a large scale reallocation of global resources ... attention needs to be focused on the **spending priorities** of all governments not only the rich. As long as a number of the worst affected countries continue to spend large parts of their income on military adventures (eg. in the current civil war in the Congo) it is futile to expect that more international aid will directly assist those living with HIV;"*

(Dennis Altman, LaTrobe University, Australia)

Don Edwards (Justice and Sustainability Associates, US) emphasizes the importance of building up a public health system

"construct the foundation of a pan-African Saharan health system which is surely what has never existed – not even under colonialism."

Various contributors agree that the attitude of policy-makers, the private sector and the media need to change:

"what is needed is ... a willingness to address aspects of human behaviour that are still not seen as fit for public debate and a willingness to bring into the discussion the most marginalised, and most vulnerable, members of society."

(Martin Foreman, Panos Institute, UK)

One contributor points to the importance of collecting data for demonstrating to policy-makers and official governments the impact of epidemics such HIV/AIDS on the development of communities. Conflicting perceptions and priorities still seem to bar the way forward:

"For many policy-makers costs of prevention and treatments of seropositive people is a waste of money; so they do not realize the relation of health and development."

(Roberto Lopez, Coordinator, Accion Internacional para la Salud, Peru)

Don Edwards, Justice and Sustainability Associates, US opens up the issue of **white supremacy** as the key barrier to achieving equitable health care and equity in general:

"I believe it is absolutely true that African lives are currently valued less than all of the world's other lives. And, the roots of this lesser valuation are grounded in the pseudo-science and racist social mythologies that the entire world has been oppressed for over 500 years.

It's my opinion that from the standpoint of sustainable development, it is a matter of realizing that how goes Africa is how goes the world! If we use the five capitals model (human, social, natural, manufactured and financial), we cannot avoid a commitment to creating a just and sustainable Africa. The planet's future requires it. In order to achieve global security, we will have to establish the socio-economic, human and environmental security of Africa. And to do that simply comes down to placing the same value on black mother's children as is placed on white mother's children.

One of the foremost HIV/AIDS behavioral researchers in the US, Dr. John L. Peterson, Georgia State University, states that "the social and physical environment can promote or impede HIV risk behaviors in communities (e.g., social norms, places for meeting, etc). Therefore, efforts are critically needed to change the social ecology of communities that affect the social and physical dynamics of community empowerment over HIV transmission in vulnerable populations."

(Don Edwards, Justice and Sustainability Associates, US)

● Good models/ideas how to overcome barriers

One crucial issue that has been discussed continuously is the creation of **partnerships** as a way forward (see more in the section on suggestions for Earth Summit 2002).

Set up **"A Season of AIDS Awareness"**

*"As suggested at a session at the UNGASS on the topic of AIDS and Human Rights, the Board of Directors [of the African Services Committee] will look at the proposal to hold a **regionally-based worldwide annual period of reflection and review** on what governments are doing regarding HIV/AIDS and what NGOs are doing.*

This period of time would be modelled on the Season of Non-Violence sponsored by the Interfaith Center of NY. The Season of AIDS Awareness would stretch from December 1, World AIDS Day, through December 10, Human Rights Day, and each region would have two days in which to hold consultations to review what progress has/has not been made.

The compressed timeframe might serve quite well – the idea found interest with ILO Director-General Juan Somavia, with whom I spoke in June in New York City."

(Richard Jordan, Board of Directors of African Services Committee, US)

Be aware of the **role of culture**

"From our point of view as indigenous peoples of Kenya, it is a good idea if the issue of culture in relation to HIV/AIDS is critically addressed. We should openly discuss HIV/AIDS among all members of the households, clan and community at large for better understanding of the issue. We also suggest the incorporation of effective family life education into school curricula in order to inform young children about how they can prevent themselves from AIDS.

With the invention of the anti-retroviral drugs we hope will liaise with pharmaceutical companies, to ensure that they are affordable and readily available to the whole population, more so to the indigenous peoples (Nomadic pastoralists) who occupy the marginalized, discriminated Arid and Semi Arid lands."

(Peris Kebenei and Judy Imbanga, Indigenous Information Network, Kenya)

Role of religion

One contributor emphasizes the positive role religions can and should play in influencing people's lives:

"I think that the problem of HIV can't be solved only by the governmental policies and pharmaceutical companies, it needs awareness of people themselves... – limiting this disease needs a good motive inside themselves, not only to have better health, but to have a better life. And I think that's the role of religions in all societies. To give people motive for change..."

(Yara, Medical student, Ain-shams University, Egypt)

● How can Earth Summit 2002 tackle the wider question of equitable health care?

First of all, it is important to strengthen the link with the existing international process on HIV/AIDS:

*"The Earth Summit might look at both the recent **United Nations Declaration on HIV/AIDS** and what it omits to say. In particular governments need to accept that the health of their citizens is fundamental to national survival, and that arguments about tradition, culture and religion cannot be used as alibis to prevent effective information and programs such as the provision of clean needles and condoms which have been proven effective in slowing the rate of HIV transmission."*

(Dennis Altman, LaTrobe University, Australia)

Additionally, **multi-stakeholder partnerships** for implementation must be strengthened

"Partnerships! This should be the key word at the Summit. The Governments need the support and money of pharmaceutical companies to develop effective health care and the governments need to ensure that health care is distributed equitably. Without acknowledgement by stakeholders that government and private enterprise need to work in partnership with each other, I do not believe that equitable and SUSTAINABLE health care will prevail through the nations of the world."

(Stephanie Dunstan, Australia)

"HIV/AIDS is an auto-immune disease, with multi-dimensional disastrous results. It causes many changes to private relations, family bones, and has changed the whole of society. We need to stick together all the social sectors. Our role in the Summit for Sustainable Development will be to awaken the social conscience of our citizens to obtain more cohesion and up-to-date scientific, reliable information we have to become partners, and decide to undertake common projects and organize meetings to exchange ideas. Our initiatives have to aim toward further developing reliable knowledge."

(Kalliroi Nicolis, Social Aid of Hellas, Greece)

"setting up a multi-sectoral approach to the pandemic should not concentrate on developing policies only, but concentrate on the implementation part."

(Ellis, AIDS Expert, Namibia Red Cross, Namibia)

Young people: A population in real danger

Francisco Rosas describes the threat HIV infection poses on young people in Mexico City, due to abuse of drugs and alcohol, unemployment, sex work, domestic violence and troubled gender relations. Problems that are a threat to the country's future and that can be found in most countries heavily affected by HIV/AIDS:

"I would like to hear from people from the government what they will do with this population of young adults with the shadow of AIDS on their lives. In Mexico, sex experiences are starting at early ages in this group of teenagers and young people. I would like to invite people from government to take real decisions that favour young people affected. Efforts from professional sex educators are useful, but not enough. Until now there is no sex education national programme and efforts from NGOs are in small scale. I would like to hear from people from governments their opinion about the treatment of HIV on young people. Are the young people a new lost generation?"

(Francisco Rosas, Independent Consultant, Mexico)

Initial contributions

Four key actors contributed the initial articles for the debate:

Dennis Altman, Professor of Politics in the School of Politics, Sociology and Anthropology at LaTrobe University, Australia. Co-chair of this year's Congress on AIDS in Asia and the Pacific.

Martin Foreman, director of the Panos AIDS Programme in London. He has worked in international aspects of AIDS since 1986.

Dr Yusuf K Hamied, Chairman and Managing Director of Cipla Ltd, India.

Mencer Donahue "Don" Edwards, managing partner of Justice and Sustainability Associates, LLC, a U.S. based management consulting firm. He is a member of UNED Forum's Earth Summit 2002 International Advisory Board.

corporate accountability



(24 – 28 September 2001)

How can multi-national companies be influenced to adopt corporate citizenship and accountability for sustainable development? Who are the key actors and what are the main barriers? What strategies could Earth Summit 2002 develop to address this issue?

Executive summary

Many promises were made by business at the Earth Summit in 1992. Since then, we saw the continuation of processes of privatisation, liberalisation and globalisation. Progress in terms of corporate accountability and reporting for sustainable development has been made but against the benchmarks explicit or implicit in the Rio agreements, overall progress has been slow. To soften negative impacts of market rule domination, governments will have to put more regulation in place. However, regulations alone cannot be relied on to solve the issues.

At the global level, serious efforts are emerging to encourage positive corporate policies. Contributions focused on a number of existing regulations for corporate accountability, such as the UN Global Compact and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises – a non-binding set of standards and principles with an extensive global implementation mechanism that cover various aspects of corporate behaviour. Processes of dialogue can help produce commitments and agreements that are more binding than unilateral declarations but the implementation part of the Global Compact in particular needs improvement.

Key issues include corporate voluntary initiatives that have a crucial role to play in achieving corporate social responsibility. However, with a crumbling faith in market instruments and deregulation, they alone won't suffice to change corporate behaviour. Other issues under discussion were international regulatory frameworks with respect to social and environmental issues, which have to be the basis from which voluntary initiatives can emerge. In addition to voluntary codes of conduct and regulatory frameworks, a shared commitment to building effective partnerships should be strengthened for which a continuous dialogue between the various actors needs to be established. Other contributors mentioned a new "Global Deal", ie sustainable development legislation, in which leading corporate actors, civil society organisations and governments would negotiate a binding international convention on some of the key issues. The concept of environmental brand labelling was also discussed.

Following on from that, the roles and responsibilities of key actors were identified. To achieve sustainable change, all stakeholders have to play their part and act in concert: multi-national corporations should respect international conventions and invest more resources to ensure implementation of environmental and social impact assessments. A fundamental conscience change needs to happen at senior managerial level. Values need to be related to economic mechanisms. Shareholder value needs to be understood in a more systemic way.

The main barriers to achieving corporate accountability were discussed as well as good models of how to overcome them. The question of globalisation was looked at from different angles. Barriers include issues such as the dominant business paradigm of profit as the ultimate aim of all business and the stockholder model of raising capital. To target this aim the media, consumer associations, trade unions, consumers and regulators need to get involved. Another barrier discussed is the current legislation about the tax deductibility of costs of living.

Several examples of good models for furthering corporate responsibility were suggested, ranging from a symbiosis between profit and not-for-profit corporations and governments to the concept of a sustainability ranking list of multi-national corporations for investors. However, other contributors emphasized that corporations should rather be influenced by invitations to trade ethically.

Recommendations for Earth Summit 2002 included:

- strengthen existing legal frameworks for TNCs and trade unions;
- develop a new global framework;
- determine a modality within the UN system for negotiating obligations on corporate investors;
- governments should focus on corporate disclosure to achieve accountability;
- aim at globally accepted and enforced standards that will break the stranglehold of the private sector over individual governments. ●

● Background

"Markets cannot take care of everything and ... the developments in the social domains are lagging. Market economies generally respond well to effective demand, but they are considerably less efficient where it comes to responding to need. This inefficiency points to a fundamental shortfall of market economy philosophy: the failure to address needs. To soften negative impacts of the current era of market rule, governments will have to govern more to close the gap left by the unbridled belief in the effectiveness of market forces..."

Governments are often no longer in a position to put the required regulations in place without exposing itself to various retributions. The vested interests are too powerful and the perceived need to keep the national economy afloat, even at the expense of future generations is considerable. As a result, much of the reigning economic and political practice is based on the immediate rather than the future for the serious political changes and short-term risks that effective regulation would require. It is for this reason that we cannot rely entirely on governmental regulation to solve the issues."

(Urban Secretariat of UNCHS (Habitat))

What tools for corporate accountability have we got

"In addition to earlier tools such as environmental and social impact assessment techniques, we have seen the spread of auditing, life cycle and supply chain management, and stakeholder engagement tools. There has also been progress in the area of socially responsible investing (SRI), with an array of company and sector screening tools now available. Often, these tools have been developed by small funds, but increasingly they are being adopted by much larger and increasingly mainstream funds."

(John Elkington, Chair of SustainAbility and The Environment Foundation, UK)

At the global level, serious efforts are emerging to encourage positive corporate policies. Some existing regulations include

- a) the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises – a non-binding set of standards and principles with an extensive global implementation mechanism:

"The **OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises**, revised last year, cover the areas of human rights, workers' rights, and the environment as well as other aspects of corporate behaviour. They reflect the expectations of governments and include the possibility for governments to intervene concerning corporate conduct through National Contact Points that must be established by adhering country governments. They apply whether or not a company has adopted its own code. This instrument needs to be more widely known and could be central to building corporate action that contributes to sustainable development."

(Jim Baker, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Belgium)

- b) the set of principles of the **UN Global Compact** that, according to Pieter van der Gaag (ANPED, Netherlands) is "destined to fail, if its implementation side is not dramatically improved."

"The UN Global Compact is a process rather than a code of conduct, but it is based on nine principles that also cover human rights, workers' rights and the environment. The process of dialogue can help produce commitments and agreements that are more binding than unilateral declarations because they reflect a relationship in which companies have interlocutors. There are more than **10 framework agreements** between International Trade Secretariats (ITS), grouping unions by sector and occupation, and major multinational enterprises. One of them, the agreement between ICEM (the ITS representing workers in oil, mining, chemicals and some other sectors), and Statoil, the Norwegian based oil company, takes on board all of the Compact principles, including the principles on the environment that came out of Rio."

(Jim Baker, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Belgium)

However, not all believe that the existing frameworks are enough to deal with the challenges:

"There are no legal instruments or agencies that are present or capable of regulating the TNCs. In the reorganisation of the UN, the Centre on Transnational Corporations was closed down and the Code of Conduct that the UN had prepared for TNCs has disappeared. Today, we have the Business Council for Sustainable Development advocating sustainable business in a tremendous milieu of inequality. Poverty need not take so long to wipe out given the current world resources of knowledge, technology and capital. The North has given more importance to green consumerism than the social justice to be accorded to the workers and nations of the South. Free market and the global deal that are being banded by the North now are only lipservice that will not make the required opening up of Northern markets. Financial resources are flowing to a handful of relatively wealthy developing countries where more cash returns can be quickly generated."

(Mohan Mathews, Denmark)

● Key issues

Corporate voluntary initiatives have a crucial role to play in achieving corporate social responsibility. However, voluntary initiatives alone won't suffice to change corporate behaviour –either on the national or the global level. The faith in market instruments and deregulation is crumbling.

International regulatory frameworks with respect to social and environmental issues have to be the basis from which voluntary initiatives can emerge:

"... in the context of globalisation, one should draw on the experience at the national level. There is not a country in the course of human history where workers' rights and the environment have been adequately protected without an important role for government and other actors...

a legal framework ... effectively encourages private initiatives based on rights. The same applies to the environment where private initiative works best in the context of policy, objectives and certain legal obligations."

(Jim Baker, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Belgium)

"corporate entities are, through their sheer size, might, and organising capacity of citizens, a vital actor to have on board while transforming society to a sustainable one. Indeed a great deal of our attention SHOULD be paid to providing the framework conditions- involving voluntary and regulatory mechanisms"

(Pieter van der Gaag, ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability, Netherlands)

Howard Mollett of Friends of the Earth Switzerland strongly urges the UN and governments to use the WSSD and UN Financing for Development talks to determine a modality within the UN system for negotiating obligations on corporate investors. A corporate accountability mechanism should include increased incentives (implying removing the current incentives for companies to externalise their costs); reporting requirements to ensure that the investor both identifies and discloses its impacts on society and the environment; directors of public limited or stock-market listed companies as liable to prosecution for corporate crimes that would build on existing mechanisms of corporate governance; and mechanisms whereby adversely affected stakeholders could obtain redress.

However, one contributor argues that the international social accountability norms and auditing merit as much assessment as do the corporate practices they seek to evaluate:

"much of the burden of accountability is transferred to the suppliers in the South, and eventually to the workers themselves ... the catch is financial commitment. Who will pay for the changes? More often than not, buyers' accountability initiatives (read impositions) for their suppliers come with little or no financial backing. And the suppliers are as motivated by profits as buyers. So the burden of change is transferred to the workers themselves, through retrenchments, firing of child workers, etc."

(Y. Nagraj, India)

Other contributors suggest **a concept of shared responsibilities** between the private sector and governments:

"a private-public approach, in which governments set the outcomes and tell companies what they need to tell the rest of us, and then leave it up to the companies to find the best ways to comply."

(Naomi Roht-Arriaza, Human Rights Advocates, USA)

This view is supported by the Urban Secretariat of UNCHS (Habitat):

"A combination between regulation and shared responsibility is perhaps the most feasible direction to go. When responsibility is shared between the public and private sectors and/or among the different industry actors along the product chain, the key is to shift sufficient responsibility, through regulation and under public opinion pressure, to those with the greatest potential to trigger the actions toward more sustainable patterns of resource use and waste production."

The private sector can be an effective agent of social change and make a positive contribution within its sphere of influence. In addition to voluntary codes of conduct and regulatory frameworks, a **shared commitment to building effective partnerships** should be strengthened:

"I believe that previous attempts to convince multinationals to embrace the principles of sustainable development have met with limited success partially due to the fact that advocates for greater equity and social justice have been unable to present a sufficiently compelling argument in terms easily understood by businessmen, such as a balance sheet on the cost and benefits of implementing sustainable policies and programs. This, combined with limited receptivity on the part of CEOs to venture into unfamiliar territory, has created the perception that MNCs are generally irresponsible in their conduct and unaccountable to anyone except the shareholder..."

I believe that greater effort should be invested in identifying ... factors that could act as an incentive for MNCs to mainstream sustainable development into their management systems. This could include recognition by their peers, communities, governments or the media that acknowledges the contribution a MNC has made to sustainable development. Other options may include leveraging matching sources of funding which would allow successful models of corporate citizenship to be expanded and aligned with national or regional programs."

(Richard Smith, Sr. Development Specialist, Golder Associates, Canada)

"The macro level issue is reliability. I am sure that IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission), ITU (International Telecommunication Union) and ISO (International Organization for Standardization) are waiting the ES 2002 result for further harmonization. Stakeholders are the key actors. The micro level issues is cooperative intellectual property to replace any secrete trade of private co-generation. In terms of institutional forms, Indonesia, [for example] consists of public intellectual property (i.e. architect, state owned firms and other professional path), private intellectual property (i.e. contractor, private firms and other competitive path) and lately cooperative intellectual property (i.e. construction management, cooperatives and other moderate

path)... By means of cooperative intellectual property public and private companies produce a corporate citizenship and accountability for sustainable development."

(Tjahjokartiko Gondokusumo, CHP Cooperative, Indonesia)

To achieve this we need to learn speaking the same "language" and a continuous dialogue between the various actors needs to be established, as emphasized by many contributors.

Other contributors mention a new "**Global Deal**", ie sustainable development legislation, in which leading corporate actors, civil society organisations and governments would negotiate a binding **international convention** on some of the key issues:

"How could such a process, which would run counter-current to a traditional view of international law today (states as the only bearers of rights and duties, therefore capable of being Parties to accords) and be different from existing initiatives..., lead to strong binding effective rules? Would a simple expansion of the concept of international sustainable-development related crimes be as useful?"

(Marie-Claire Cordonier Segger, Director, CISDL, Canada)

According to Pieter van der Gaag, ANPED, Netherlands, the Global Deal opens up real possibilities to start a meaningful process that would improve the work started with the Global Compact – i.e. introduce the involvement of other stakeholders in its design, and insert accountability mechanisms.

Mitch Gold (International Association of Educators for World Peace) suggests to **brand label** the process: all corporations that comply with **Generally Accepted Standards on Corporate Citizenship**, and **Accounting for Sustainable Development** will be permitted to use the brand label. This idea includes the employment of trained accountants and an educational program, which would be implemented through both the education system, and the spiritual communities.

Along the same lines, Marlon M. Cardinoza (PhD, Environmental Management and Development, Canada) suggests that such labelling should be certified by an authorised independent body. However, there has been concern that existing standards and guideline documents (such as ISO 14001 and ISO 9000) set by the International Standard's Organization (ISO) should be strengthened rather than creating new procedures.

● What are the roles and responsibilities of key actors?

First of all, the investors/MNC's themselves have responsibilities and obligations. They should:

"respect ILO convention covering basic worker's rights; be made to observe UN Human Rights Declaration as well as the International Environmental Conventions (failure of this is leading to neglect of the rules and regulations governing forests, water and wetland resources);

invest more resources (technical and financial) to ensure implementation of worthwhile environmental and social impact assessments and hearings of the local /affected persons before proposed projects are undertaken...; show plans and intentions to reinvest profits/minimise capital transfer to home country; and they should respect national government laws (this is where an International Overseer institution is clearly lacking and urgently needed)."

(Kimbowo Richard, Programme Officer (Agric and Forestry), Joint Energy and Environment Projects, Uganda)

Other key actors include consumers; government and regulators; employees, executives and shop floor:

"A fundamental conscience change needs to happen at senior managerial level and generally in the scientific paradigm used by Western societies. Our Muslim brothers and sisters, have something to teach us. Values need to be related to economic mechanisms... "Shareholder value" needs to be understood in a more systemic way... We individually must take ownership and responsibility and I would focus resources on facilitating that individual responsibility, through associations, NGOs and trade unions."

(Veronique Raingeval, England)

To achieve sustainable change, all stakeholders have to play their part and act in concert:

"Governments – new institutions and processes of global and corporate governance must be introduced. Meanwhile, more **NGOs** must learn how to play a multi-dimensional game, pressuring poor corporate performers – but simultaneously working out how to partner with companies committed to real change. The role of the **media** will be pivotal. If the media penalise failures, but fail to celebrate early successes, the process will slow or stall."

(John Elkington, Chair of Sustainability and The Environment Foundation, UK)

How could one employ the **media** to influence MNCs to move toward ever more sustainable, equitable and fairer modes of behavior and revenue generation?

"It is up to other non media sectors like science, government and civil society, to learn how they can use the media for positive, constructive ends... It is our job, us the media professionals, to work with you, help you understand the complexities and subtleties of media and utilize that knowledge to help you achieve these goals"

(Birgitte Rasine, CEO, Lucita, USA)

Another central issue in corporate social responsibility is **trade union rights**:

"workers gain the capacity, without fear, to intervene to help protect the environment, inside and beyond the confines of their work place. The existence of trade unions also changes power relationships in the wider community... And, there is nothing that contributes more to a better environment than democracy, where active

citizens can move society forward in a way that respects and protects the environment."

(Jim Baker, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Belgium)

● Main barriers and good examples of how to overcome them

The bottom line for MNCs is, ultimately, money. Industry is focused on **profit** and this is where pressure should be applied:

"companies need to be coerced from within their markets, because it is in wealthy, developed nations that industry is at its most vulnerable. Numerous companies based in the west have been forced to change their practices because of student boycotts and national outcry over their behavior in countries that manufactured their products.

International Corporate Sustainability Partnerships that link the poorer grower/producer nations to the richer buyer/market nations should be stressed and strengthened. NGOs have proven especially useful in this endeavor to let the buyers in wealthy nations know how their product was grown or produced.

Advertising campaigns against particularly egregious corporations should be supported. Ultimately, if we can alter the way the market looks at products that were produced through environmental and/or human exploitation, then corporations will respond in kind – to protect their bottom line."

(Sarah Diefendorf, Executive Director, Environmental Finance Center, California State University, Hayward, US)

Several contributors agree that the dominant business **paradigm of money/profit/growth** as the ultimate aim of all business needs to be critically reconsidered. Suggestions to target this aim are to involve the media, consumer associations, trade unions, consumers and regulators:

*"Create a special **media** team which influence and infiltrate the media to force more airtime to be given to thinkers ... who address the practical consequences of having no values in our society, and who challenge the main business assumption that more growth, more profit, and more money is always good...*

*There needs to be a world summit team which focuses on training **consumer associations** and **trade unions** in sustainable values and economic theory... Each citizen must become an activist... Consumers must live more simply and boycott products from companies, which harm the environment. Consumers need more information than we already have on how to take practical action. Associations need to counteract passivity by making it easy to be an activist. The world summit must train the associations and monitor their progresses.*

Regulators need to encourage more strongly organic and simple living. Higher taxes on pollutant, non-sustainable products and services...

Regulators need to put in laws so that trade unions are requested by law to sit in boardrooms. Regulators need to put in laws with quotas of women in parliament as women are concerned with sustainability issues."

(Veronique Raingeval, England)

Don Scott Johnson (Citizens of Earth, USA) identifies the **stockholder model of raising capital** in which the profit motive is detached from the profit making processes as the chief barrier to sustainable productivity:

"In corporate structure, the stockholders are the people that profit without doing any work. When a corporation exploits the environment or human beings, it does so because its first duty is to its stockholders who buy and sell based on the stock's valuation regardless of the methods used to increase that values."

His suggestion evolves around **worker owned enterprises** that would operate sustainably: egalitarian sources would provide capital for starting worker-owned enterprises; long-term sources of capital would come from the enterprises themselves; each successful worker owned - enterprise would be mandated in a legally binding way to contribute a percentage of profits for establishing more such enterprises; this would ensure a continuous, exponential growth pattern.

Willem Adrianus de Bruijn (ZERO Association, Belgium) suggests that the current **legislation about the tax deductibility of costs of living** is one of the main barriers:

"Multi-national companies like any other producer will be forced by the laws of competition to improve the ecological quality of their products and to account for this quality, when consumers can deduct, from their taxable income, the money they spent on ecological products... The capacity to deduct costs from taxable income gives the ability to pursue a goal efficiently, in the free market economy, while earning income... The costs of living could be managed as costs with a positive effect on income and therefore tax deductible, if income is considered, by law, in a time scale of generations, rather than of a human life."

The barriers to corporate responsibility can be found both inside and outside corporations:

*"Inside companies, the barriers include **competing priorities** at board level, the silo structure of management systems, and the fact that staff executive and staff incentive systems rarely reward good performance in this area – and even more rarely punish bad performance.*

*Outside companies, the problems include weak or non-existent **governance systems** and regulatory frameworks, ineffective enforcement, corruption (in some regions) and the fact that the markets (e.g. most consumers and investors) are not yet demanding state-of-the-art triple bottom line performance from companies."*

(John Elkington, Chair of SustainAbility and The Environment Foundation, UK)

The current discussion focuses mainly on achieving CESRA [Corporate Environmental and Social Responsibility and Accountability] through **creating “share-holder value”**:

“By putting a cost on externalities, and by proving the long-term sanity of sailing a “sustainable” course, we aim to persuade those who are the owners of the corporate entity to force management to follow the sustainable development route. Indeed the hunger for increases in the money-value of shares expressed by so many shareholders, forces companies to look at cutting costs to increase profits when markets have reached their limits of growth or aren’t growing fast enough. Therefore, cost-internalisation through ecological tax reform, extended producer responsibility policies and other “cost-internalisation” regulations will automatically point the “cost-cutters” nose in the right direction. The hunger for money is turned into a driver for CESRA.”

(Pieter van der Gaag, ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability, Netherlands)

Should **globalisation** be regarded as a barrier to achieving corporate accountability? As can be expected, opinions on this issue diverge widely:

“The facts of globalisation are revealing. A small group of powerful individuals are now richer than the population of Africa. Just 200 giant corporations dominate a quarter of the world’s economic activity. General Motors is now bigger than Denmark. Ford is bigger than South Africa... Is this the “global village” we’re told is our future? Or is it merely an old project that used to be run by the divine right of kings, and is now run by the divine right of multinational corporations, and by the financial institutions and governments that support them?”

Michael Saunby (Futurologist, Teachmore, UK) argued against that: corporations must maintain their good name if they are to recruit staff or sell products; and governments still have extraordinary power over people and corporations. However,

“developing countries are prime targets for multinationals to exploit because of weak governments desperately looking for foreign capital, and more importantly, because workers rights and union laws are either non-existent or easy to step around.”

(Xavier Menage, Postgraduate Student, Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy, Australia)

The powers invested in private companies can be changed; one way to strengthen developing countries’ position would be to apply the same regulations to TNCs as are already being applied to local businesses:

“Earth Summit 2002 can encourage the governments of developing countries to muster the self-confidence and pride to treat multinationals the same way they treat their indigenous businesses. Sadly, in many instances, to do so would be to commit interested investors to organisational purgatory. We are our own worst enemies on this question, my friends.”

(Wesley Gibbings, St Lucia)

● Good models for furthering corporate responsibility

Some of the debaters point out that it is not an easy task to find a fully accountable organisation that could serve as a good model for corporations.

“Thriving businesses treat employees and local communities better than failing ones. Commercial enterprises are more inclusive and less discriminatory than religious organisations. With public services due to complex funding it is often harder to establish if good value is being provided. Often where a public service is provided customers have less choice.”

(Michael Saunby, Futurologist, Teachmore, UK)

Arguing from within the current paradigm, Donald F. Schutz (Chair, Environmental Sciences Division, American Nuclear Society, US) suggests a **symbiosis between for-profit and not-for-profit corporations and government** should be recognised and dealt with in a positive way as we approach the Summit:

“The profitable corporation is the most effective social welfare organization. Corporations are the main engines for the creation and distribution of wealth. The beneficiaries are both customers and workers as well as the community as a whole through corporate contribution to taxes. Government doesn’t create wealth, but may be useful in redistributing it in socially desirable ways.”

A sustainability ranking list of MNCs for investors should be created:

“Then, ethically motivated investors could boycott the companies that are abusing labor and the environment. This is quite simplistic, but might actually have good results if ethical peer pressure within the investment world paid off.”

(Dr. Dusty Becker, Kansas State University, US)

However, other contributors emphasize that MNCs relate to other actors (i.e. customers, investors, rivals, suppliers, employees, political and legal forces) through **trade** and that there are more effective ways to influence:

“Corporations understand trade, perhaps rather than making up lists of good and bad corps, or lists of demands, what is needed is an invitation to trade. A trade in ethical know-how, e.g. opportunities to develop new markets rather than exploit cheap labour... Perhaps rather than the somewhat negative approach of exposing the failings of corporations, which might simply reduce their income and affect their future capacity to do good, it would be better to spend this marketing effort on showing business the benefits of long term relationships with NGOs and others.”

(Michael Saunby, Futurologist, Teachmore, UK)

“if customers and investors start asking questions about the company’s performance as corporate citizen, they will take this as serious as the price of the product or the financial profit. How do we

get there? Proactive companies need positive feedback from the market, lagging companies and individuals need stronger regulatory processes. We all need more transparency and the courage to rethink our priorities and to work together."

(Martin Tanner, Corporate Affairs, Novartis, Switzerland)

Set a clear and legal **framework for control** of TNCs and trade organisations:

*"Ultimately such control must and will happen... Many NGOs working on 2002 are seeking stronger controls. Some of us suggest that the legal basis for such controls should be an agreed set of **Environmental Human Rights**, which would help work towards ensuring a safe and healthy environment for everyone... Johannesburg could be the point at which work towards a new convention starts."*

(Chris Church, Co-chair, ANPED (www.anped.org), UK)

Finbarr Carter (Just Business (www.jusbiz.org), UK) suggests that a global and ethical dimension should be included in the teaching and learning of Business Studies and Economics. 'Just Business' is an example that aims to assist teachers of Business Studies and Economics in the UK and their students to explore the global and ethical dimensions of their subject.

● What strategies could Earth Summit 2002 develop to address this issue?

"We should develop solutions on a scalable basis, so that as we build momentum and achieve our first set of goals, we can continue to move and expand and build on the same principles and strategies we have begun with."

(Birgitte Rasine, CEO, Lucita, USA)

Many contributors agree that the Summit should invest in a candid assessment of progress to date; identify the barriers that slow progress and strengthen regulatory frameworks and systems of governance.

Strengthen existing frameworks

"Earth Summit 2001 should not try to re-invent the wheel when it comes to instruments to influence the behaviour of enterprises... Rather, it should encourage all parties, including many companies who are serious about their impact on the world, to make the OECD Guidelines work and to use all possibilities to generate useful global social dialogue and engagement, including the Global Compact."

(Jim Baker, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), Belgium)

Earth Summit 2002 could call for a global process to **develop a new global framework**:

"... [that should] clearly, and for managers understandably, state what it is that global society expects of corporations in sustainable societies ... The global code should provide the framework or the standard of mandatory reporting and verification. Corporations hold a great deal of information. The work underway in SA 8000 on the social side, and the multi-sectoral Global Reporting Initiative, can provide the basis for this global and binding monitoring and verification regime. The code should also require of governments to reform their own policy coherence in support of the implementation of this code..."

The process should discuss the norms and values underpinning corporate behaviour and the mechanisms to monitor and verify the measures put in place by the corporate entities to comply and go beyond. A global convention on Corporate Accountability could emerge."

(Pieter van der Gaag, ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability, Netherlands)

Governments should focus on disclosure and verification to achieve **accountability**:

"Rio +10 should call on governments to implement rules that increase corporate disclosure of their environmental and human rights records. Even requiring companies to state whether they have a policy on certain specified areas, and to explain how they know whether they are complying with their own policies, would help. So would incentives for companies to certify that they are complying with OECD and other guidelines. For such certifications to be useful, they would have to be verified by outside parties. Here, too, government can play a role, setting standards for outside certification that ensure that communities, unions, etc. are involved in such processes, rather than leaving them with the large accounting firms who have no credibility with community actors."

(Naomi Roht-Arriaza, Human Rights Advocates, USA)

Earth Summit 2002 "should be aiming at globally accepted and enforced standards that will break the stranglehold of the private sector over individual governments. No corporation should be allowed to have the strength to force governments in short-term counter-productive cooperation at the expense of longer-term sustainability."

(Urban Secretariat of UNCHS (Habitat))

Initial contributions

Three key actors contributed the initial articles for the debate:

Jim Baker, Director Multi-national Enterprises, ICFTU (International Conference of Free Trade Unions), Belgium

John Elkington, Chair of SustainAbility and the Environment Foundation, UK

Pieter van der Gaag, Executive Director, ANPED (The Northern Alliance for Sustainability), Netherlands

registered participants



(The list does not indicate for which time period people were registered.)

By the end of the debate we had more than 870 subscribers from over 100 countries. The debate attracted a large number of subscribers and contributors, representing many different stakeholder groups (academics, artists, businesspeople, faith communities, governments, NGOs, indigenous peoples, local authorities, media, scientists, students, trade unions, UN officials, women's groups and individuals).

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UNED Forum is a unique multi-stakeholder non-governmental organisation – a network and forum on sustainable development which has promoted outcomes from the first Earth Summit in 1992 and is now working on preparations for Earth Summit 2002.

UNED Forum is an international multi-stakeholder organization, committed to the promotion of global sustainable development. Based in London, England, UNED's primary objective is to promote sustainable development through facilitating the involvement of major groups and stakeholders in the policy work of the United Nations and other inter-governmental institutions. UNED is the National Committee for in the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in the UK, and UNED activities also support the work of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). However, UNED is not an official body of the United Nations.

Our commitment to global sustainable development is best expressed in Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration, both agreed to at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), or more commonly known as the Earth Summit, which took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992.

Established in 1993 as an outgrowth of the Sustainable Development Unit of the United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (UNA-UK), UNED Forum has grown from a UK organization to an international multi-stakeholder forum. Directed by and accountable to a democratically elected Executive Committee of UK stakeholders, UNED's newest project **Towards Earth Summit 2002** is guided by an international advisory board reflecting the stakeholder groups outlined in Agenda 21.

The United Nations Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland provides the secretariat for UNED Forum.

UNED Forum's work on the preparations for Earth Summit 2002 includes:

- Information provision for all stakeholders: website at www.earthsummit2002.org, providing the roadmap to Earth Summit 2002, Policy Briefing Papers, monthly e-newsletter Network 2002, relevant documents and links for UN bodies, international, regional and national preparations, etc.
- Capacity-building; workshops with NGOs in various parts of the world
- A framework for multi-stakeholder processes; www.earthsummit2002.org/msp

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