

Statement by UNED Forum

Honourable Ministers, Your Excellencies and Distinguished Guests,

I am making this statement as co-Chair of UNED Forum. An international multi stakeholder Forum for sustainable development.

Individual stakeholder groups have made their own statements and commentaries on their priorities and vision for the WSSD. I am presenting this overview statement following a UNED facilitated meeting between some of the stakeholders represented here. It represents some of the issues that were raised by individual stakeholders and points made in the discussion. It does not represent a negotiated synthesis of all the different stakeholder views. But it draws on all their contributions and seeks to give greatest emphasis to points on which major effort will need to be taken by governments and others during the next twelve months if a successful summit is to be achieved.

Governance

Existing international institutions for environmental governance could be made more conducive to the effective participation of African stakeholders, and the ultimate achievement of sustainable development in the African continent. There is a need for the reform of these institutions, and commitment of resources to these institutions in order to allow them to focus on issues of a regional nature. At the national level, there is a need to integrate sustainable development into relevant governance structures, making sustainable development an integral part of national, local government, and corporate sector objectives.

HIV/AIDS

HIV/AIDS presents a serious developmental challenge for Africa, with women and the youth being most at risk. More resources and capacities should be put into the fight against HIV/AIDS. HIV/AIDS issues should be mainstreamed into all development processes.

Employment

Creating employment opportunities is a critical component of sustainable development and managing effective just transition to more sustainable business practice.

Debt Cancellation

Many stakeholders have called for the cancellation of Africa's debt. There is a need to ensure that the cancellation is coupled with good governance and accountability for effective reallocation of these resources towards sustainable development programmes.

Globalisation

Forces of globalisation continue to have adverse effects within the African continent. This has resulted in entrenched poverty, marginalized populations, ecological disintegration and destruction of livelihoods. The North-South divide continues to widen, undermining the sovereignty of many African states, further constraining African countries to deal with the challenges of sustainable development.

Gender and Equity

The continued marginalisation of women and the girl child is detrimental to any efforts by government and civil society to attaining sustainable development.

Security

The tragic events in the US a month ago underline the urgency of the need to move towards a more sustainable world in which social justice, respect for the community of all life and of nature all unite to support a more harmonious and secure future for humanity. Sustainable development, social inclusion and justice and environmental security are all intimately related and reinforce one another. At ground level action programmes on sustainable development can be a crucial part of breaking out of the vicious circle of poverty, alienation and despair which is the breeding ground of civil strife and conflict.

Stakeholder Participation

The summit should be used as an opportunity to dispel the widely held conception of Africa being seen as “the dark continent”. This can only be realised if all stakeholders are given the space and resources to effectively participate in the process leading up to the summit. This participation should be guided by an African vision of development such as the New African Initiative (NAI). The outcome of the summit should be seen as the tool towards the achievement of this vision. It is therefore imperative that Africa develops a strategic position for the summit

The Global Deal

While there is no doubt that implementation of Agenda 21 depends on partnerships amongst all sectors, the formalisation of a global “deal” at the Summit requires a rigorous and transparent process to ensure a successful and concrete outcome. It is therefore proposed that a process to develop a framework within which stakeholders could contribute their views on the component parts of a global “deal”. Some stakeholders would like to see African ministers support the call for a partnership between governments, business, and other stakeholders to develop and implement a “Johannesburg Plan of Action”. They further requested that ministers consider ways to initiate a multi-stakeholder process to develop the required framework for such a deal. Some felt that this should include targets for stakeholders to help ensure better implementation of the agreements at the Summit.

Conventions and legal instrument

The Summit should be the occasion for the ratification and coming into force of the Kyoto protocol (and the associated measures and instruments), the Biosafety Protocol, and further steps on implementing the Conventions on POPs and PICs, Desertification. Implementation and enforcement machinery for MEAs needs to be strengthened. The integration of the environmental and social aspects of sustainable development in a new legal framework might be pursued as a new initiative.

Conclusion

Some have long experience and commitment to the cause of sustainable development, going back to the Stockholm Conference and earlier. The insights of Youth and newcomers bring new energy to the debate. Some are old campaigners at international level. Others are achieving remarkable results at the local level, on the shop floor and often against very unpromising circumstances. All however are united in their enthusiasm and determination to use the Summit process to re-awaken and re-energise world commitment and action for sustainability. We look to the heads of governments, ministers, and other leaders and champions to commit themselves now to coming to Johannesburg and to rise to this challenge of working with all of us for a more sustainable future.

Thank You.