

# **Contribution to the 24th-25th September, 2001 UNECE Regional Ministerial Meeting for the World Summit for Sustainable Development**

## **Plenary session, Monday 2. September 2001**

### **Mark Moody-Stuart -Business Action for Sustainable Development**

Business Action for Sustainable Development is an initiative formed by the International Chamber of Commerce and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development specifically to prepare for the WSSD in Johannesburg.

First, we welcome the emphasis in the draft Ministerial Statement on co-operation between groups. This is something strongly supported by business and in fact I only have an opportunity to speak here today as a result of the co-operation of ANPED and Peter van der Gaag who kindly relinquished his slot. The areas where business has made progress on Sustainable Development, and I believe that there have been many, have been based on sectoral activities e.g. the Marine Stewardship Council, the global Mining Initiative, sustainable forestry initiatives, Responsible Care in the Chemicals industry, action in the cement industry and so on. But all also result from co-operation with others -not only in helping to find solutions but in identifying the key issues of importance to society at large. We in business know that we cannot do it alone; equally we welcome opportunities such as this to contribute.

Second, there has been considerable reference today to monitoring and accountability. Business has also made progress in the last few years on publishing targets and reporting openly progress against those targets. The reporting has often covered all three pillars of sustainable development. A start has been made for example by some businesses in publishing progress against published Greenhouse Gas emission reduction targets. We believe that this is a key not only to check on progress and benchmark, but it is also important in building trust and demonstrating accountability. But again, what we report and the nature of the targets are very sector dependent. Key performance indicators vary from industry to industry -there is no one size or shape that fits all.

Third, we welcome the presence of the South African delegation as hosts of the Johannesburg Summit and hopefully this will help draw our attention to the major issues outside this region in other parts of the world. But in discussions with the South African Government we understand that there is a major budget problem relating to the WSSD. I was very pleased to hear Minister Michael Meacher on behalf of the UK Government also raising this issue and committing to significant financial support.

It is clear that it is to the advantage of all that the meeting be held in South Africa. But it is equally clear that South Africa should not have to bear undue expense in hosting the meeting.

Not surprisingly, the South African government has turned to business to see what

form of financial support might be available from business to meet a very large foreseen shortfall from government contributions.

This is an area where I think great caution is needed. Many members of society are suspicious of business. Business is seen as powerful, and is suspected of using that financial muscle to influence national and international events. Business funding of the WSSD would inevitably lead to fears that business was exerting undue influence. Businesses were approached for support of the WTO meeting in Seattle -those who did so were not surprisingly accused of trying to buy influence and access.

I believe that while very sympathetic to the problem of South Africa, and not wishing to avoid responsibility, individual businesses will be extremely nervous about making any contributions.

Clearly the most desirable route would be for the WSSD to be funded by government contribution, and I would urge governments here to support the South African government in funding. For business to do so will be very problematic, and in my view potentially exacerbate one of the impressions of business that we are working hard through consultation and co-operation to dispel. It would indeed be ironic if a Summit on Sustainable Development resulted in a burden on a country such as South Africa.