

Johannesburg two years on

From vision to action

The Johannesburg Summit was a sober event, but it was not a step backwards. It showed that even in times of globalization, the guiding vision of development remains valid – development that aims to achieve more global justice today while taking account of the consequences for coming generations. For the first time, a major international conference considered the consequences of globalization for development in holistic terms. Johannesburg was thus of added value for multilateralism.

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The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) took place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 28 August to 4 September 2002, ten years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Earth Summit) in Rio de Janeiro. It was attended by some 100 heads of state and government, and representatives of 193 countries, along with more than 8,000 delegates from civil society groups. In Johannesburg, the international community took stock – for the first time – of the progress being achieved in the Rio follow-up process. It also reaffirmed existing international development objectives, and agreed to new targets, timetables and implementation measures for global sustainable development. At the end of the Summit, a Plan of Implementation was adopted, along with the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development. These documents expressly reaffirmed the commitment to the principles adopted at the Rio Summit and to the guiding vision of sustainable development and «Agenda 21» – a comprehensive and dynamic programme of action which contains detailed strategies for the environment and development. To mark the end of the series of major international conferences, begun ten years earlier in Rio, the international community also renewed its commitment to multilateralism. The outcomes of the Johannesburg Summit are thus an important pillar in a global partnership geared towards sustainable development.

The Plan of Implementation and the Johannesburg Declaration

In the Johannesburg Declaration, the heads of state and government reaffirm the global significance of sustainable development and poverty eradication. They underline the need to protect the climate and natural resources, call for a shift away from «non-sustainable» production and consumption patterns, and pledge to shape the globalization process in a socially and ecologically responsible way.



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The Plan of Implementation contains key targets and timetables and can thus make a significant contribution to the implementation of the Millennium Declaration adopted by the United Nations in 2000 and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) which it contains. The Plan of Implementation reaffirms, enhances and in part further develops the MDGs. It includes the following commitments, which are especially important for development policy and cooperation:

- ① By the year 2015, to halve not only the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water, but also the proportion of people lacking access to basic sanitation. This pledge was made in response to a call backed especially by Germany, and enshrines, at international level, one of the key recommendations for action adopted at the International Conference on Freshwater in Bonn in 2001.
- ② The major role played by energy in poverty reduction and development was underlined. The Summit called, among other things, for the development of environmentally sound and more efficient energy technologies, as well as a substantial increase in the use of renewables worldwide. It also agreed to measures to improve access to modern energy services and enhance energy efficiency. This includes promoting programmes and partnerships that support efforts to implement the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Devel-



At the opening event in Johannesburg, children from all over the world called for sustainable global development.

opment (NEPAD) to secure access to electricity for at least 35 percent of the African population within 20 years.

- ⑤ The importance for climate protection of the Kyoto Protocol and its ratification was reaffirmed with special emphasis on the Clean Development Mechanism – which allows the industrialized nations to have their investments in climate protection in developing countries count towards their own reduction commitments and which is expected to yield commercial benefits for eco-friendly corporate conduct and promote the transfer of modern technology to developing countries.
- ④ The growing degradation of natural resources is to be reversed through the implementation of appropriate strategies. For example, the efforts to reduce species extinction should be felt by 2010. The depletion of fish stocks in the world's oceans should be brought to a stop, and the aim is to ensure their recovery by 2015.
- ⑤ The benefits arising from the use of genetic resources should be shared more equitably. To this end, negotiations are to commence at an international level within the framework of the Biodiversity Convention. The German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) vigorously supported this demand from the developing countries, which is in line with the basic principles

enshrined in the Federal Government's Program of Action 2015 on poverty reduction.

- ⑥ By 2020, chemicals should be used and produced in ways that minimize significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.

Thus from a development perspective, the Summit was an outstanding success. At the Johannesburg Summit, Germany – led by its Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and Federal Ministry for the Environment – was a driving force for sustainable development and global poverty eradication, lobbying consistently for the adoption of ambitious targets, especially in the energy and water sectors. This bears witness to Germany's pioneering role in promoting sustainable development in key activity areas.

Initiatives and partnerships

In Johannesburg, Chancellor Gerhard Schröder also announced three specific initiatives to be pursued by the German Federal Government:

- Germany would host an **International Conference for Renewable Energies**;
- Germany would participate in the **Global Network on Energy for Sustainable Development**, launched in Johannesburg;
- The already successful cooperation with developing countries in the energy sector would be expanded into a **strategic partnership**.

It would be wrong, however, to measure the Johannesburg outcomes solely in terms of the success of the intergovernmental negotiations. In addition to the documents negotiated on a multilateral basis, more than 200 «partnerships» were established in Johannesburg on a voluntary basis between individual states or regional associations, international organizations, the private sector and NGOs. Twenty-five of them involve German partners and BMZ is involved in nine of them.

The «partnership» mechanism brings together governments, business companies and the civil society in a variety of alliances. Of course, these voluntary arrangements cannot replace the multilateral agreements negotiated between individual actors. Nonetheless, the partnerships have set goals for achieving tangible progress towards sustainable development in specific areas. They are intended to serve as positive models, demonstrating that it is possible to adopt more sustainable patterns of production and consumption and that solutions to specific problems can be found in a spirit of partnership, also between industrialized and developing countries.

The involvement of the private sector plays a key role in this context. In view of their economic power, transnational corporations and the social and environmental impacts of their decisions wield considerable political importance. The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) is now responsible for developing the partnership mechanism and monitoring the implementation of the objectives adopted by the partnerships.

The Johannesburg outcomes must also be viewed within the context of other international processes and events, notably the Millennium Declaration adopted by the heads of state and government in 2000, the International Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey, and the Doha Development Agenda on international trade relations. The task now is for the international community to achieve tangible progress through joint efforts in all relevant areas. The time for setting targets has passed. Now these targets must be implemented and commitments fulfilled.

What has happened since Johannesburg?

Today, almost three years after the WSSD, the implementation record is mixed, with clear progress being achieved in some areas. Here are some examples:

Energy: The International Conference for Renewable Energies («Renewables 2004»), announced by the German Chancellor and prepared jointly by the Federal Ministry for the Environment and the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, was held in Bonn from 1 to 4 June 2004. The Conference attracted considerable interest at both national and international level in promoting sustainable energy systems, encouraging the expansion of renewable energies worldwide, and using energy services to eradi-

Friends of the Earth (NGO) set up carved figures in front of the Summit building to show that environmental pollution is increasingly threatening people everywhere.

cate poverty. Through its bilateral development cooperation, the BMZ is already providing 100 million Euro annually for renewables, with a further 100 million Euro earmarked for energy efficiency. During the conference, Federal Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder announced the creation of a special facility for renewable energies and energy efficiency. Over the coming five years, this fund is to provide up to 500 million Euro additionally per year to finance low-interest loans for corresponding investments in developing countries. The facility is to be set up together with the KfW development bank. The 3 600 delegates at the conference agreed on a political declaration and a number of policy recommendations on promoting renewable energies. Another major outcome of the Bonn conference is the «International Action Programme» which contains some 200 individual actions and commitments by governments, international organizations, the private sector and non-governmental organisations to promote renewable energies and energy efficiency.

Water/basic sanitation: The Summit agreed to an additional time-bound target on basic sanitation. The EU currently allocates close to 1.4 billion Euro annually to water and sanitation programmes and other hygiene-related projects in developing countries. Germany contributes some 350 million Euro annually via its bilateral projects. Since the Summit, the EU has voted in favour of establishing a Water Fund. The G8 countries have adopted an Africa Action Plan which also includes water resource management. The BMZ has developed a number of proposals on improving trans-frontier water management, and is pursuing this work, within the G8 context, together with African experts.

Financial resources: The Summit called for the replenishment of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, and this has now been achieved. The BMZ participated actively in the negotiations here. Germany is the



Photo: Schipulle

third largest contributor to both of these funding mechanisms.

Chemical safety: The international community has complied with the Summit's call for the swift ratification of two major global environmental conventions relating to chemical safety: the Rotterdam Convention (Prior Informed Consent – PIC) and the Stockholm Convention (Persistent Organic Pollutants – POPs). Both conventions are scheduled to enter into force. The BMZ runs its own chemical safety programme to support the implementation of these and other conventions.

Tropical forests: The Summit called for immediate measures to combat illegal logging and the illegal timber trade. The European Commission has now drafted an Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Government and Trade (FLEGT), comprising measures to facilitate the enforcement of existing forest laws and to establish more robust controls on trade in forestry products. The Federal Government actively supports these measures, the BMZ contributing some 125 million Euro annually for bilateral measures to protect forest eco-systems.

Codes of conduct: In a process led by the BMZ, a number of German companies have entered into voluntary agreements

on social standards with their suppliers and subsidiaries in developing countries. The agreements aim to curb child labour and establish acceptable working conditions. They are the outcome of the «Codes of Conduct Round Table» which involved companies, trade unions and NGOs.

This latter example in particular shows that the outcomes of the WSSD cannot be measured solely in terms of the progress achieved in implementing government programmes. Much will depend on the response by other actors – especially the business community. In Germany, there was a great deal of public interest in the Johannesburg Summit, especially in view of the increase in extreme weather events worldwide and climate change caused by human activity. Thanks to the strong involvement of civil society, the business community, academia, parliamentarians, local authorities and local government associations, Johannesburg also served as a «market place» for the exchange of information and opinions and a place of mutual learning, and thus met one of the key demands of the Rio Summit – to increase the role of major groups in the political decision-making process and to develop new forms of participation. Ultimately, progress towards a sustainable future can only be achieved if the necessary changes are recognized, accepted and supported by ordinary people.