

## The Challenge and Spirit of Rio

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Thank you for inviting me to speak today and share my thoughts on Rio+20. Although I have been asked to speak on the contribution that stakeholders might play, I do want to start by making comments on the agenda for Rio+20 as well. In doing so I will draw on the article Maurice Strong and I did for the BBC in May this year.

To start with, I would like to commend Brazil for the leadership they have shown in persuading the world that another Earth Summit is needed. Unfortunately, some developed countries have had to be dragged to the table.

There is a simple question we should all ask ourselves - is the world going in the right direction?

If the answer to this question is no, then we should ask what are the current challenges that the world needs to address, how can we address the challenges **together** and how long do we have to address them?

### **Broken promises**

The answer to the last question is "not long". Most of the problems the world now faces have been on the international agenda for decades, some going back as far the Stockholm environmental conference in 1972 where the seminal report from the Club of Rome warned us of the 'Limits to Growth'.

We know from the UNEP GEO4 Report, the IPCC, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment that the problems we are facing have not reduced but become more acute - not as a result of the lack of proclaimed government commitments to action, but due to their dismal performance in implementing their agreements.

Indeed, if governments had implemented the many conventions, treaties and declarations they negotiated from Stockholm to Rio to Kyoto to Johannesburg, we would be well along the road to sustainability and then we would be better placed to address the challenges we now are facing.

But governments have not done enough by far to carry out their commitments, particularly as to helping finance developing countries' movement towards sustainability.

This failure has only added to the anger of most developing countries at the continued broken promises and has undermined their ability to make commitments of their own.

As a result, we now face challenges on a number of fronts: I want to highlight five:

1. Human societies are living beyond the carrying capacity of the planet;
2. Climate change has emerged as an out-of-control driver;
3. There is now becoming an increasing link between environment and security;
4. Governments have still not given the UN the mandate, the resources or the institutional capacities required to monitor and enforce international agreements;
5. The still-prevailing, consumption-based economic model is not only failing to deliver progress to enormous numbers of the world's population, but is seriously threatening the economic stability of all nations, and compromising the prospect for any of us to live on this planet sustainably.

Despite all that, I do believe that these issues can be positively influenced by Earth Summit 2012. We still have time to change direction, but this time there can't be any more failed promises. Successfully addressing **the challenges** we face will require an ambitious and creative agenda and us all working together governments, intergovernmental organisations and stakeholders.

### **1. The green economy in the context of poverty alleviation and sustainable development**

The current economic model, which has brought unprecedented prosperity to the more developed countries and to particular people in those countries, has only deepened the disparity between them and most developing countries.

The parallels of the ecological problems with the financial crisis are clear. The banks and financial institutions privatised the gains and socialised the losses.

We are doing the same with the planet's natural capital. According to WWF, we are operating at 25% above the biological capacity to support life and that is before adding another billion people by 2020. We are going to see an even greater ecological crunch in the years to come

Our present lifestyles are drawing down the ecological capital from other parts of the world and from future generations. We are increasingly becoming the most irresponsible generation our planet has seen.

The past 30 years have been characterised by irresponsible capitalism, pursuing limitless economic growth at the expense of both society and environment, with little or no regard for the natural resource base upon which such wealth is built.

Today, the principal goal of our economy must be to improve the lives of all the world's people and to free them from want and ignorance - without compromising the planet itself.

An economy that integrates sustainable development principles with responsible capitalism can produce enough wealth to meet the needs of people in all nations, equitably and sustainably.

Earth Summit 2012 can clearly draw a roadmap to set the world on the path to a new "economy" that is sustainable, equitable and accessible to all.

### **2. Emerging issues**

Environmental and security issues are becoming increasingly intertwined.

The "environment-security/insecurity nexus" covers such overlapping issues such as climate security, energy security, ecosystem destruction, biodiversity loss, food security, water security, health security –all of which are contributing to an increase in environmental refugees. All this was reflected in the chairs text from Prepcom 1. Rio+20 should give a roadmap on how these issues will be addressed.

### **3. Sustainable development governance**

The present global institutions are wholly inadequate to deal with the Earth's major challenges.

As most of the necessary changes are economic in nature, primary responsibility for decision making cannot be made by environmental ministries. They will continue to be vested in the ministries' of finance, development and trade.

Perhaps its time to ask the finance, economics and industry ministers and not the environment ministers to take the leading role in preparing the Rio Summit addressing the sustainable development agenda in front of us, to ensure that the economic decisions will further the necessary transition to sustainability.

Earth Summit 2012 needs the input from not only the formal preparatory process but also NEPAD, the African Union, OECD, the regional development banks, the World Bank, the G20 as well as stakeholders if it is to see take forward the green economy.

Earth Summit 2012 should agree on strengthening and upgrading the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), which should be the most influential champion of the global environment.

We need a review of the environment Conventions to reduce fragmentation and increase cooperation and coordination. Perhaps they should even be put under UNEP coordination.

Just as we have had problems mainstreaming environment we need to strengthen and mainstream sustainable development in the UN system. I suggest that it may be time to return to the idea of transforming the Trusteeship Council, a core body of the UN, into a Sustainable Development Council. Something Maurice Strong advocated in 1992.

A Sustainable Development Council that can address the emerging and critical issues that will need to be addressed in the coming years would be better than the Security Council doing it.

Additionally, Rio+20 should revisit the idea of a sustainable development board that was suggested by the High Level Panel on System Wide Coherence to ensure coordination of UN activities at the country level on sustainable development

We were asked to identify gaps in the institutional architecture? I am not going to go into depth but will leave you with three thoughts on this. The gaps that some stakeholders have been suggesting are:

- A framework convention on corporate accountability built from the new ISO 26000
- A global convention on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration – access to information, public participation and environmental justice perhaps built on the UNEP guidelines
- A global framework convention on Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on the Precautionary Principle. This could then address issues like nano technology, geo engineering, cloning

### **Stakeholders Role**

For my final comments I want to share my thoughts on what stakeholders might bring to the table for Rio+20. This is considerable.

One of the indicators that sustainable development is no longer a central part of governments thinking has been the demise over the last ten years of sustainable development councils and commissions.

In fact, the United Kingdom has just closed down its council in the last month. That was a mistake.

The logic of National Councils on Sustainable Development has been that involving stakeholders in the national decision making processes means that those decisions are more likely to be right and that they are more likely to be implemented often through partnerships between government and stakeholders.

For Rio+20 a minimum for governments should be the re-establishment of national councils for sustainable development. They should then take a significant role in mobilising for the Summit. Maybe one role could be national assessments and of course they should then work with governments to implement the outcome from Rio.

Rio+20 should be seen nationally as a partnership opportunity for governments and stakeholders.

What we need as far as Rio+20 is a bringing together of the good practices that exist in all countries of the green economy. For example I was very impressed with what Cuba has done in becoming a low carbon economy. The work they have done on urban agriculture is something that could be shared with all of us. Collecting good practice from governments, intergovernmental organisations and stakeholders could create a knowledge bank which can help the transition to a sustainable economy. After Rio perhaps then focusing on rolling out the best five replicatable projects in each economic sector, in each region or sub region which could make a real difference.

Stakeholders already are working through the UN Summit collaborative partners in inputting to the Rio+20 process and planning events to add substance. ICSU plan a global conference in London prior to Rio, ICLEI plan a conference in Rio around the Summit, there is to be a Global Youth Assembly the week before Rio. If you compare the preparations with Rio in 1992 there is huge interest and mobilisation of stakeholders involved already compared to prepcom for Rio when there was only 10 NGOs there.

Rio+20 should strengthen science-policy links, and scientists should be asked to make their work more policy relevant and solution oriented.

Governments could be asking stakeholders to bring their own targets on a sustainable and green economy to the table.

Local and regional governments have already made commitments on CO2 emission reductions. They should be encouraged to do this under Rio+20 and should be challenged to re-launch local their Agenda 21 program as a concept around the green economy. All local authorities should create a local green economy to take forward the outcomes from Rio and to engage their population in a journey to a more local sustainability. There is already being planned a Cities Climate Registry by local government prior to Cancun cities plan to sign a pact and will commit to Monitoring Reporting and Verification targets.

Industry sectors should be asked what they will do to address the key elements of a sustainable and green economy – there are some interesting examples out there with Coke Cola and Pepsi moving to water neutrality and Pepsi begin the first company I know accepting water as a basic human right.

In addition to the traditional industry groups – Rio should reach out to the social market networks and entrepreneurs. Companies should work with their trade unions to help green the companies' workplace and their activities. A move to zero carbon, zero water, zero waste strategies will require cooperation of governments and stakeholders.

As the US Summit Bureau member helpfully reminded us, Rio+20 should be a '*Rio for 20-somethings*': there must be moves to recognize our inter-generational responsibilities towards young people, starting by ensuring that they have an education system that is re-oriented towards Sustainable Development as promised by Agenda 21. They have to be educated, empowered and mobilized to rise to their generational challenge of creating a green, post-carbon economy in their lifetimes.

The Youth Caucus WCSD in Johannesburg called on governments to "*See youth as resource, not a problem.*" Hearing that, Kofi Annan remarked: "*Of course they are: youth are the most precious resource any nation possesses.*" We need to learn to engage with them better, and hopefully, at Rio+20, we shall. For it is the youth of today who will be the major beneficiaries of a successful outcome of the Rio 2012 Summit; likewise they will be the major victims if it fails.

Rio+20 should ensure meaningful participation of relevant stakeholders on all levels in the 2012 process as we can play a significant role in implementing the agreement.

Rio should become a festival of the best ideas and best practices on how we move towards a more sustainable and green economy.

**Perhaps the RiO+20 outcome document should have an annex with all the stakeholders own commitments.**

### **Is there a Common future?**

Since 1992, awareness of the Earth's environmental challenges has become universal. What has been lacking is the will of governments to act. Perhaps we all thought we had more time; we don't!

Rio+20: needs to utilise communications media assertively and creatively - to engage the global public in a global conversation on how we are able to live on this "one planet" together. "One planet living" echoes the idea of equity, fairness and planetary boundaries.

We need a 'Yes We Can' approach to Rio+20.

We can **reboot** sustainable development.

We can **refocus** our local, national and global economies around a sustainable economy.

We can **reform** our sustainable development institutions so that they can cope with the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

We can **re-establish** National Councils for Sustainable Development

We can **re-launch multi-stakeholder** partnerships for sustainable development

We can **learn to live** on this planet together equitably taking into consideration not only this generation but future generations – who have a right to a good quality of life.

The Earth Summit 2012 presents a unique platform for negotiating the co-operation needed to achieve a new deal between North and South, between rich and poor, between governments and stakeholders and between present and future generations. This co-operation is critical to the future of all people on the planet. It is a co-operation we must achieve.

Perhaps the time has at last come for governments to adopt the Earth Charter as a value base to guide us.

The future is not a gift: it is an achievement.

In 1992 governments showed considerable leadership in adopting Agenda 21 and the conventions on biological diversity and climate change.

People are willing to make the right choice. But they need leadership.

They're hungry for leadership. The question I leave with you is can you give that leadership?

**Stakeholder Forum website for Rio+20**

[www.earthsummit2012.org](http://www.earthsummit2012.org)

**UN web site for Rio+20**

[www.uncsd.org](http://www.uncsd.org)