

# AFRICABIO

Issue 1 – June 2002

*This Newsletter is intended as a forum for information exchange and dialogue in the build-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). This first issue provides an overview of the WSSD, what it is and where and why it is happening. Forthcoming issues will focus on major issues on the agenda of the nine major groups involved and other relevant issues as they arise.*

◆ **WHEN, WHAT & WHERE?**

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*Sustainable development: "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of the future generations to meet their own needs."*

## **WHEN, WHAT & WHERE?**

The United Nations Summit, otherwise known as the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) is being held 26 August – 4 September 2002 at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa. It is anticipated that the WSSD will involve 65,000 delegates, including the 20,000 UN accredited delegates consisting of 5000 government delegates from 189 UN states, 10,000 delegates from the nine Major Groups (**see section on Who?**) and 5000 media delegates. In addition, it is anticipated that there will be 50,000 Global Forum delegates and a further 5000 additional tourists, media and delegates to side events. There will be a pre-summit 19-23 August and the opening ceremony of the WSSD will be held 23 August.

### ***Parallel Events:***

Simultaneous to the actual UN Summit, which will be attended by the official UN delegates only, there will be major parallel and side events, including:

### **Civil Society Forum: 18-25 August, Johannesburg Expo Centre, NASREC**

Otherwise known as the NGO Global Forum, this is open to representatives of all of the Major Groups identified in Agenda 21 and is managed by the Civil Society Management Council (CSMC), an independent secretariat. The website dedicated to this event is: [www.worldsummit.org.za](http://www.worldsummit.org.za)

The Civil Society Forum is intended to give ordinary people, and non-governmental and community-based organisations, a platform from which they can make suggestions about how sustainable development should work. The aim is to broaden support for the agreements that may be reached at the WSSD. The Secretariat is charged to oversee the preparation and co-ordination of the WSSD Global Forum.

The primary objective of the WSSD NGO Secretariat is to ensure that African and International Civil Society organisations, especially those from the South, participate effectively at the WSSD in order to ensure that the review and implementation of Agenda 21 is developed as an outcome of the World Summit. Specific objectives include.

1. To prepare South African civil society for participation in the WSSD NGO forum, and to facilitate their participation and meaningful input in the processes leading to, and after the WSSD;
2. To co-ordinate the involvement of African and International NGOs in the WSSD preparatory processes, and at the event itself;
3. To ensure that the WSSD Global NGO forum is hosted, and that there is participation of Southern and Northern Civil Society in the Summit.

### **Business Forum: 26 August –4 September, Hilton Hotel, Sandton**

Organised by Business Action for Sustainable Development (BASD), it will bring together 800 - 1000 business leaders from all over the world to discuss issues surrounding sustainable development. The Forum will also provide an opportunity for business's to discuss the core themes that will shape the Summit agenda. Visit the BASD website for more information:

[www.basd-action.net](http://www.basd-action.net)

### **Local Government Session: Local Action Moves the World – 27-30 August, Sandton Crown Plaza**

Involving 500-800 representatives from around the world, this session will be focus on the unique ability of local government to achieve tangible improvements in global environmental and sustainable development conditions through cumulative local action. Supported by the UN and major international associations of local government authorities, this session entitled "Local Action Moves the World," will provide an opportunity for local government leaders and their partners to present the key messages from the Local Government Dialogue Paper, the official representation of the local government position, to the Summit and the world. The International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI) is co-ordinating local government input to the Johannesburg Summit. For more information, visit the ICLEI website:

[www.iclei.org/iclei.htm](http://www.iclei.org/iclei.htm)

### **Ubuntu Village and Exhibition: 10 August – 10 September, Wanderers Stadium, Johannesburg's Innesfree Park**

The Ubuntu Village and Exhibition is a place for people of the world to unite on common ground around the nerve centre of the Summit. It provides a venue where dialogue can be stimulated and opportunities for partnerships maximised. The Ubuntu Village will be situated close to the United Nations precinct and has been designed as the transport node for the access to the NGO Global Forum. It will include the Best Practice Exhibition on Sustainable Development, which is the first of its kind to accompany an intergovernmental summit.

As the cultural and infrastructure hub for the Summit and parallel events, the Exhibition will provide an opportunity for people from diverse cultures to interact, share and showcase their unique cultural heritage and its impact on sustainable development through entertainment and exhibition activities. Logistically, the Ubuntu Village will provide a central information and service venue, which can be accessed by all delegates on a 24-hour basis. The central focus point of this village will be Tensile 1, the largest moveable event venue in the world. With 11 000m<sup>2</sup> of covered space, it will provide a home to the International Best Practice Exhibition and many leisure and entertainment facilities. For more information, visit the JOWSCO website: [www.joburgsummit2002.com](http://www.joburgsummit2002.com)

## **OBJECTIVES**

The overall objective of the WSSD is to strike a balance between economic development, social development and environmental protection and to review the progress made in implementing agreements initiated in Rio (Agenda 21 will **NOT** be renegotiated); This should include:

- identifying major accomplishments and lessons learned;
- identifying constraints hindering implementation;
- addressing new challenges and opportunities that have emerged since 1992;
- strengthening the institutional framework for sustainable development;
- proposing the provisional agenda and possible themes for the Summit.

The aim is also to plan future activities and agree on new commitments to speed up the implementation of sustainable development, specifically Agenda 21. Action oriented measures will focus on issues including:

- increasing globalization;
- biotechnology and information technology revolution;
- the stalling of a new round of trade negotiations;

- the impact of resource depletion and climate change.

Other emerging themes and issues apparent from the regional and global preparations include:

- poverty alleviation;
- financing for sustainable development;
- globalization and trade;
- international governance;
- global compact between governments, the private sector and civil society;
- special initiatives such as biodiversity, climate change, fresh water, energy, rural and urban development, technology transfer and capacity building;
- ratification of international agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety and the UN Convention on Migratory and Straddling Fish Stocks.

### **WHO?**

The WSSD and related events will involve representatives from all sectors of society, including heads of state, national delegates and representatives of all nine major groups identified in Agenda 21, which are:

- Women
- Children and youth
- Indigenous people
- Non Governmental Organisations (NGO's)
- Local authorities
- Workers and trade unions
- Business and industry
- Scientific and technological communities
- Farmers

### **WHY?**

Since the first World Summit in Rio in 1992 there has been little progress in promoting the ideals of sustainable development. The situation continues to deteriorate, with continued poverty and hunger of a growing world population, sickness and inadequate healthcare, and the degeneration of the environment. Despite the large number of conventions and institutions, the lack of funding, poor and ineffective implementation, strategy gaps and a lack of overall co-ordination and agreement compound the issue.

When the progress from the Johannesburg WSSD is reviewed in 2012, it will be critical to demonstrate that the people who lived in poverty now have a significantly improved quality of life, economic opportunities and that the next generation will live in a safer and healthier environment.

To fully understand the significance of the WSSD, it is necessary to have an idea of the history events leading up to this initiative.

- 1972: UN Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, Sweden  
This was the first world conference on the environment and resulted in a number of important decisions including the *Stockholm Declaration on the Human Environment* and the creation of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP);
- 1980's: World Commission on Environment and Development established by UN;
- 1987: *Our Common Future* or the "Brundtland Report" was published and served as the basis for the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992;
- 1992: The World Summit, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil – this was the largest ever gathering of heads of state, senior government officials and stakeholder representatives from the nine

development and underlined the need to integrate environmental and developmental issues. The Rio Summit resulted in:

- *The Rio Declaration on Environment & Development* – this reaffirmed the Stockholm Declaration and gave 27 guiding principles for actions, and contributed to development of general of international law principles;
- *Agenda 21* – a non-binding action plan for sustainable development and outlines actions, role of specific groups and means of implementation – the blueprint for achieving sustainable development;
- *The Forest Principles* - non-binding principles to encourage consensus on the protection and conservation of forests;
- *Creation of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development* - aiming to promote the implementation of Agenda 21 and foster dialogue and partnerships between governments, the international community and the nine “major groups”;
- *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* - commitments included developing national inventories of emissions, formulating programmes to mitigate climate change and promoting education, training and research and development;
- *The Convention on Biological Diversity* – to promote the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity through commitments to the promotion of scientific and technological co-operation, the establishment of protected areas, the eradication of alien plant species, respecting and maintaining traditional knowledge and practices, and providing financial resources;
- *Countries of the “North” were asked for funding (0.7 % GNP – UN target by 2000)* by the South for development activities but this has not been honoured.
- 1997: Rio +5, New York, USA – a special session of the UN General Assembly to review the progress made since the Rio Summit. This was unsuccessful at rekindling any significant momentum for sustainable development due to the lack of a thorough preparatory process;
- 2000: General Assembly of the UN – adopted a resolution to hold a 10 year review of the Rio Summit;
- 2002: WSSD, Johannesburg, South Africa – to result in meaningful action and a renewed commitment to sustainable development.

## **How?**

In light of the lack of success at the Rio+5 summit, it is hoped that the WSSD (otherwise known as Rio+10) will rekindle momentum and actions related to sustainable development through a thorough preparatory process at national, regional and global level and through the active involvement of all stakeholders and major groups. This process is happening at three levels:

- Nationally: to mobilize general awareness and involvement of citizens and major groups in the process and co-ordinate national input into the regional and global preparatory activities, including the development of national Agenda 21 review reports by governments. Countries are also being encouraged by the UN Secretariat to:
  - identify three or four sustainable development progress targets achievable within the next 5–10 years;
  - identify the most successful sustainable development activity in the country since Rio and to organize national competitions focusing on relevant issues.
- Regionally: a series of regional meetings in 2001 to assess progress in implementing Agenda 21 and to identify prospective activities within each region.
- Globally: Undertaken by the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development through a series of preparatory committee meetings (PrepComs). These sessions are organised by the Tenth Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD10) which is the Preparatory Committee and central organising body of the Summit. Documentation relating to these meetings is available from [www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/prepcoms](http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/prepcoms)
  - PrepCom 1: 30 April – 2 May 2001, New York, USA
  - PrepCom 2: 28 January – 8 February 2002, New York, USA
  - PrepCom 3: 25 March – 4 April 2002, New York

*It is anticipated that the Agenda of the WSSD will become clear and made available after PrepCom4.*

### **ACCREDITATION & LOGISTICS**

Overall logistics are being undertaken by the Johannesburg World Summit Company (JOWSCO) – a non-profit section 21 company that is wholly owned by the South African government and which is managing logistical operations on behalf of the Summit's host nation and also coordinating logistics for parallel events.

To participate at the Summit and the PrepComs, an organisation must be accredited with the United Nations and individuals must be affiliated with an accredited organisation. For more information on logistics or registration/accreditation for major groups, media or individuals go to [www.johannesburgsummit.com](http://www.johannesburgsummit.com)

### **AFRICABIO'S PREPARATIONS**

AfricaBio, the biotechnology stakeholders association, has initiated a number of activities in preparation for the WSSD. These include:

- ◆ The dissemination of the accurate information about the risks and benefits of biotechnology and the potential impact on South Africa and Africa;
- ◆ Information transfer to key decision makers;
- ◆ Contribute to the production of Position statements on the state of biotechnology in South Africa, Africa and globally. This will involve inputs from stakeholders across the world.
- ◆ A local schools competition on Biodiversity and Biotechnology during the build up to the WSSD. Finalist posters will be displayed at the Ubuntu Village during the WSSD. This competition is being organised collaboratively by the International Plant Genetic Resources Institute (IPGRI) the Foundation for Education, Science and Technology (FEST) and AfricaBio. For more information, go to [www.africabio.com](http://www.africabio.com) or [www.fest.org.za](http://www.fest.org.za).
- ◆ Dissemination of an electronic newsletter on relevant issues to as wide an audience as possible in the build up to, during and immediately following the WSSD;
- ◆ A number of side events and exhibitions during the WSSD.

*If you would like to be involved in these preparations or to contribute/respond to this newsletter, please contact [africabio@mweb.co.za](mailto:africabio@mweb.co.za)*