ROADS TO THE SUMMIT

Reports from six countries on progress towards Sustainable development

India
Japan
South Africa
Tanzania
Uganda
United States

Prepared by LEAD International and Panos London for the World Summit on Sustainable Development

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# ROADS TO THE SUMMIT

## Executive Summary

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Executive Summary

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), to be held in Johannesburg from 24 August to 4 September 2002, will be the largest gathering on sustainable development ever.

Ten years on from the groundbreaking UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio – known as the Earth Summit – WSSD will be both a global progress report and the first serious attempt to get to grips with sustainable development (see http://www.johannesburgsummit.org for the official UN summit website).

At Rio, governments agreed five documents:

- The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development – 27 guiding principles of rights and responsibilities for sustainable development
- Agenda 21 – a 310-page blueprint for sustainable development covering social and environmental goals, implementation and financing plans
- The Forest Principles
- The Framework Convention on Climate Change
- The Convention on Biological Diversity

The purpose of WSSD is to review progress since 1992 in implementing sustainable development, and to discuss the way forward.

This report looks at progress on sustainable development in six countries and the European Community, and assesses their state of preparation for WSSD. The countries are: India, Japan, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda and the United States.

Progress since Rio

In the ten years since Rio, sustainable development hasn’t been very high on international agendas. In the words of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan: “Progress towards the goals established at Rio has been slower than anticipated and in some respects conditions are worse than they were 10 years ago.” In many countries – rich and poor – this is often because of a perception that sustainability is expensive to implement and ultimately a brake on development.

Poor countries for their part usually lack the physical infrastructure, ideas and human capacity to integrate sustainability into their development planning. Besides, they are often quite sceptical about rich countries’ real commitment to sustainable development and demand a more equitable sharing of environmental costs and responsibilities. Many people also believe that environmental problems can wait until developing countries are richer.

Having said that, most of the countries analysed in this report have established environment ministries and signed or ratified the main Rio environment conventions. And many – including the US – have made a degree of progress in implementing Agenda 21 at the local level. In addition, the decade since the Rio Summit has seen a flowering of new environmental NGOs. Many of those who were new to Rio are
now more mature and play an important role in their countries’ sustainable development policymaking.

**Defining sustainable development**

But what about sustainability? The concept of sustainable development was defined in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” – that is, the pursuit of economic and social progress and equity, within the limits of the world’s natural resources. At Rio it was confirmed as a workable aim for everyone, from individuals to governments, and enshrined in Agenda 21.

Ten years on, there is still no widely shared vision of what sustainable development might mean in practice. India sees the idea of a light ecological footprint as part of its cultural heritage. Japan, on the other hand, is debating whether the emphasis should be on the “sustainable” or on the “development” half of the equation.

**Poor countries**

The main force shaping development since 1992 has been economic globalization, specifically liberalization of trade. This has tended to increase the gap between rich and poor (according to most analyses). In response, many development organizations and many governments of less developed countries, with South Africa in the lead, have sought to put poverty reduction at the top of the summit agenda. There is as yet no international convention on poverty and many Southern governments have long argued for poverty reduction to be given greater global importance.

**Rich countries**

Some Northern governments and international organizations, on the other hand, are pushing for the summit to focus on some natural resource issues which they see as urgent and dangerously neglected – such as water and energy. They argue that concerted action to address these would be an achievable outcome of the summit, whereas poverty is harder to deal with, and is more appropriately the subject of other international agreements and fora. Some Northern countries, including Japan and the US in this report, are finding it difficult to get enthusiastic about the summit. The US, however, is taking a closer interest in global poverty-related issues following the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001.

All Northern countries want the summit to come away with concrete proposals for action. At the same time, they do not want the summit to encroach upon other international initiatives, such as climate change, biodiversity, desertification, international trade and development finance, which are all discussed in separate and comprehensive international meetings.

**The UN agenda**

For the UN Secretary General, for the UN Environment Programme, and for some NGOs, the summit is an important opportunity to move towards building consensus on how, and why, sustainability should be integrated into national and global development, trade, financial and other policies. The UN Secretary General has called for concrete proposals in five areas: water, energy, health, agricultural productivity, and biodiversity and ecosystem management.
The NGO agenda
Environmental organizations will use the summit to call countries to account; to praise positive initiatives, and to shame those that have taken little action in areas such as protecting forests, biodiversity, oceans and climate, and promoting renewable energy.

Some environmental NGOs will also want to call the US to account for its rejection of UN environmental treaties. Others, however – and some Northern governments – may want to link sustainable development with national security, to help make the summit more appealing to the US.

Many environmental NGOs – and some governments – will also use the summit to lobby for the 30-year-old United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to be strengthened or shut down altogether and replaced by an independent global environment organization. This new organization would be similar to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in that it would have legal powers to penalize countries that are failing to honour environmental obligations.

The business agenda
The past decade has seen a surge in global government support for business to get involved in sustainability. The summit organizers are keen for businesses to undertake partnership projects with governments and NGOs. Senior business leaders from rich and poor countries will be in Johannesburg. Many will be on their government delegations and the main global business organizations have agreed to unite under a single umbrella group for WSSD: Business Action for Sustainable Development.

Globalization and other issues
The summit is also expected to draw large numbers from the anti-globalization movement. Many powerful governments and multilateral organizations believe that further liberalization of global trade is a fundamental requirement for any development progress. According to this view, the new round of trade liberalization talks agreed at the November 2001 meeting of the WTO at Doha will place development (including sustainability) as the goal of trade.

The opposite view, held by many NGOs and likely to be loudly represented at or around the summit, is that globalization as it is occurring at present is having negative impacts on the economic, social and environmental aspects of sustainable development. For such NGOs, this summit should be used as an opportunity to reflect on the long-term direction that globalization/liberalization is taking us in. One specific proposal from several NGOs is for international rules on corporate accountability (overturning, they hope, the establishment of the principle of self-regulation by the corporate sector in 1992) and regulation of transnational corporations.

Other issues that some governments want to see discussed include insecurity, the failure of some states, the underlying causes of terrorism, technological progress in communications, and the role of science and technology in sustainable development.
Sustainable development has made great inroads into the lexicon of India's policymakers. It is a goal of the national planning system and there is plenty of environmental legislation, environmental management institutions – and even a ministry for renewable energy. Similarly, there are many examples of successful practical projects such as bio-villages and water harvesting – and a cultural history whose values match closely those of sustainable development.

But many observers wonder whether India’s path to sustainability is a real one, given that much development continues in the usual resource-intensive ways, driven by short-term goals. They point out that the challenge of making food and basic natural resources available to the poor has not yet been properly addressed; environment protection laws are not consistently implemented, and there is no overarching strategy with top political backing to guide and supervise the whole system.

For the Johannesburg Summit, the Indian government’s priority is to demand that the rich world shows that it is serious about tackling poverty and conserving the environment. It will challenge the rich world to reduce its high consumption levels, and to increase development assistance. There is also a recognition in official and non-governmental circles, that India must and can find its own solutions to sustainable development.
“We cannot make the poor and the deprived wait any longer in their aspiration to live a better life. This is the first and foremost task in sustainable development [the] ultimate ethical responsibility for those of us who have been voted into government by the poor.”  
Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Delhi, February 2002

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INDIA

Indian scriptures and ancient knowledge reveal an ethos that is close to today’s concept of sustainable development. Indeed, this link with the environment is reflected, to some extent, in India’s constitution and legal systems. The government claims it is committed to a model of development that would leave as light an ecological footprint as possible, and notes that India’s late Prime Minister, Indira Gandhi, was the only head of state to attend the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972 – the Stockholm Summit.

The reality, however, is that sustainable development is little more than a pretty phrase used to decorate official reports. Though awareness about the vulnerability of ecosystems has increased many-fold since the Rio Summit of 1992, in India as elsewhere, action has left little scope for optimism. Actual development in most sectors is proceeding along the conventional path of resource-intensive, large-scale measures that often overlook the basic needs of local communities.

Sustainable development is restricted to projects – isolated models that require extraordinary commitment and strong financing. From the water-harvesting success of the Tarun Bharat Sangh in Alwar, Rajasthan, to solar engineers schooled at the Barefoot College of Tilonia, Rajasthan, or the well-known Pani Panchayat concept of Maharashtra’s villages; from the bio-villages developed by the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, to small efforts at organic farming, these are local endeavours remote from becoming national patterns.

In reality, how can sustainable development work for the poor in this country of over a billion people? More than 26 per cent of India subsists on around $100 a year (down, it is true, from 36 per cent in 1993-94). Globally, 78 per cent of world income goes to the richest billion people. Within the nation too, the poor and hungry are not always the focus of government actions – yet sustainable development is meaningless if a country cannot feed its hungry. One critic points out: “The government is holding 60 million tons of foodgrains in its buffer stocks while 50 million human beings hungering for food have no access to it. The present development paradigm is not a sustainable one.” Another huge challenge stares India in the face: access for all people to natural resources and basic civic amenities.

Many ordinary citizens doubt whether sustainable development is workable. Kamla Chaudhury, a former chair of India’s Wastelands Development Board and a member of the UN Secretary General’s committee for the Johannesburg Summit, asks: “Does sustainable development mean anything in today’s context? It may require a relook and a redefinition at Johannesburg, to create a good guide for action – both for the North and the South.”
PROGRESS SINCE RIO

In the decade since Rio, India has made remarkable progress in putting environmental concerns on the table. Deforestation and pollution of air, water and land have been reduced. People participate in conservation – a paradigm shift from the 1980s, when people were driven out to save the jungle. Environmental awareness in India has reached global standards.

R. K. Pachauri, Director General of the Tata Energy Research Institute (TERI), and recently elected Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, feels the country has come a long way: “I think India’s successes have been largely in terms of engagement on global environmental issues, such as in the area of climate change. Domestically, there is today a great deal of awareness on sustainable development issues, which is getting translated into actions not only at the national level, but also in some of the states. The conservation of national resources is being taken far more seriously than before.”

India is the only country in the world to have a government department devoted to renewable energy, the Ministry of Non-Conventional Energy Sources (MNES); three per cent of installed capacity in the country is from non-conventional sources of energy.

The Ministry of Environment and Forests has worked closely with TERI, an independent, not-for-profit research organization, to carry out an appraisal of sustainable development in national planning in India, prior to and since Rio. Their voluminous report is now being finalized. In another new scheme, all Indian states will produce State of the Environment reports every three years. The government is also working on a National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

Recent national Five Year plans have stated their intent to move towards sustainable development. According to P. V. Jayakrishnan, Secretary of the Ministry of Environment and Forests, “Whether it is with water, power, health, women’s issues or livelihoods, sustainable development is a central concern in the Tenth Plan.” India’s Country Report to the international Commission on Sustainable Development (set up to implement Agenda 21 globally) states how integrated land-use planning, pollution control and conservation of biodiversity have been successfully adopted. A National Land Use and Conservation Board (NLCB) has been set up in the Department of Agriculture and Cooperation, as the policy-planning, coordinating, and monitoring agency for issues concerning the health and scientific management of the country’s land resources.

The government says it has taken serious steps to reduce pollution, expand renewable energy, promote rainwater harvesting and encourage community participation for sustainable development. According to Ashish Kothari, founder of the environment action group Kalpavriksh and Coordinator of the Technical and Policy Core Group of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP), India’s Planning Commission, is “increasingly talking of natural resource budgeting or accounting, and recently commissioned a task force report that lays out plans for providing 100 million people with employment, livelihood, and food security through the regreening of 43 million hectares of degraded land”.

There has also been a tremendous growth in people’s initiatives for managing natural resources without environmental degradation, thanks to a vibrant network of NGOs involved in grass-roots work.
After the Stockholm Summit in 1972, the 42nd Amendment to the Indian Constitution in 1976 allowed incorporation of environmental concerns into Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Rights and Duties. The Ministry of Environment and Forests (MOEF), created in 1985, is today the primary governmental caretaker for India’s environment, along with state and central Pollution Control Boards.

Significant initiatives, laws and directives to protect the environment:
1974: Water (Prevention and Control) Act. The first real environmental legislation, limiting the discharge of pollutants into water. This act established the Pollution Control Boards.
1982-83: The Wildlife Institute of India is set up to strengthen wildlife research.
1985: Formation of the National Afforestation Development Board.
1987: Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency established to focus on broad-basing the use of renewable energy.
1993: Environmental Action Programme – to integrate environmental concerns into development.

International agreements:
1992: Montreal Protocol, 1987. Designed to reduce the production of substances that harm and deplete the ozone layer. India is phasing out the production of ozone-depleting substances by 2010. India also has the Ozone Depleting Substances (Regulation and Control) Rules created in 2000.
1992: UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. At Rio, India was one of 170 nations that agreed to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to control global warming. A national inventory of GHG sources and sinks, mitigation options, and research efforts to identify India’s vulnerability to climate change are some of the efforts being made to try to understand and resolve the impact of climate change on India.
1992: Convention on Biological Diversity. 182 countries, including India, have become party to this convention since Rio. But only 38 per cent of them (Worldwatch Institute, 2002), have submitted national conservation strategies. India’s MOEF prepared a National Policy and a Macrolevel Action Strategy on Biodiversity in 1999. A more detailed action plan is currently being developed for sub-state, state, regional and national levels.
1994: UN Convention on Desertification is designed to stem desertification through national and regional action programmes. India is in charge of the Agroforestry and Soil Conservation programme.

But many environmentalists are critical. They say that banning forest felling and combating pollution is only a humble start, if not a short-sighted view of development.
It is the same system that recently cleared development projects such as the Sardar Sarovar Dam (with the comment from the highest court that it could not be presumed that a large dam could result in ecological disaster). Unless action begins to target these larger issues, success may be only piece-meal.

Besides, critics point out that “the paper tiger makes no sound”. A chasm still exists between government programmes on paper and their implementation – a chasm widened by India’s poverty, illiteracy, malnutrition, and basic access to resources. According to the Tata Institute’s Dr Pachauri, “The main failure has been the lack of a clear strategy for sustainable development in the country as a whole. Economic policy still does not reflect sustainability of growth. Whatever has been achieved is generally outside the budgetary process. Although the concept of sustainable development is getting integrated into governmental strategy in some sectors there is still no integrated effort tying these sectors together within a macro framework. For this to happen the direction has to come from the top, that is from the Indian Cabinet.”

One example of the lack of government direction is in fisheries. Driven by commercial concerns, the government introduced mechanised trawlers, commercial intensive aquaculture, and marine-produce exports, putting at risk fragile marine ecosystems and the livelihoods of 7 million small-scale fisherfolk. (Fortunately, the affected community got together and was able to force a turnaround.)

Kothari also points to the draft Agriculture Policy which “pays the customary homage to sustainability, but goes on to primarily emphasize industrial scale farming, export-orientation, biotechnology, and other such thrusts that have proven unsustainable in other countries”.

So this is a major missed goal. There is strong legislation, but no implementation; a myopic attitude and a frequent fixation with short-term gain. Inadequate law enforcement and corruption are major reasons, as is the environment ministry’s lack of power compared to other main ministries that actually use resources for development. Environmentalists point to the discordant way in which the two arms of the ministry (forests and wildlife) function, leaving much for the asking in terms of cohesive action. Despite all the success brought about by the ministry, policy and judiciary, Indians are over-working their land and natural resources.

But the biggest missed goal is to help those millions who go hungry to bed each night. Poverty and a lack of livelihood options are the overarching concerns of this crowded country.

AGENDAS FOR THE SUMMIT

Government
India will push for the summit to agree priority actions to make sustainable development work for the poor. T. R. Baalu, Union Minister for Environment and Forests, says: “With growing poverty, hunger and illiteracy, global security is under threat unless timely action is taken.” Ministry of Environment and Forests Secretary Jayakrishnan praises a proposal for a World Solidarity Fund for Poverty Eradication, which was made in the Chairman’s paper for the fourth preparatory conference prior to the Johannesburg Summit.

Specially, India’s delegation is looking for solutions to basic concerns:

- Alleviation of poverty and the generation of livelihoods
• Financial resources from developed nations to support sustainable development
• Capacity-building within India to bring sustainable development into the mainstream
• Transfer of technology that is appropriate to India and a departure from the throw-away culture of developed nations

India is bound to ask an important question – are the developed nations serious about mitigating environmental degradation, especially climate change? The response to the Kyoto Protocol has not been encouraging.

Prime Minister Vajpayee has stated unambiguously that developed nations will be asked to allocate more resources for environment-friendly development as promised at Rio – through increases in aid, or by opening markets to poorer nations. “$600 billion would be required to implement Agenda 21 in developing countries. Two-thirds of this amount has to come from the developing country itself and the rest has to be from the developed world.” This obligation is not being fulfilled.

Richer nations will also be under pressure to address their highly resource-intensive patterns of production and living – patterns that threaten the very survival of the earth.

Pradipto Ghosh, an economist and additional secretary to the Prime Minister on the economic and social sector, says: “India will be looking towards a concept of user fees from developed nations on global environment resources, be it airline flight paths or the electromagnetic spectrum or marine fisheries.”

Other expectations that have emerged through national meetings include:

• Rio commitments must not be renegotiated, but must be placed into timeframes, with strategies for their implementation
• Sustainable cities – how does a country like India address the problems of its urban sprawls?
• A sustainable development measurement index should be put in place
• There is bound to be a call for targeting affluence too, in the revolutionary line of thought that if poverty must be eradicated, affluence must first be reduced and minimized

Ghosh expresses concern over the “instability in global financial flows that…wreaked havoc with developing nations”.

Civil society
A review meeting looking for action: that is how many NGOs view Johannesburg. Indian NGOs, like those in many other countries, are disappointed that little has been achieved since Rio, and are keen that for the summit to reach a concrete plan for action and implementation. Dr Pachauri says: “It is important for Johannesburg to come up with focused and time-bound plans of action that have the commitment of all the major countries of the world. There is still some uncertainty on whether this would happen. But if it does then we would have moved forward from Rio. I am cautiously optimistic.”

Other representatives of NGO groups, however, are more sceptical that Johannesburg will deliver concrete proposals. Indeed, some, such as Rajendra Singh, winner of the 2001 Ramon Magsaysay award for community leadership and
founder of the Tarun Bharat Sangh water-harvesting project in rural Rajasthan, openly question the value of a global summit. “Why should India work on a global action plan?” he asks. “Why can we not find Indian solutions to our problems? Unless we develop an Indian vision, a meeting such as Johannesburg will achieve nothing for the country. When India first became independent there was not a single village that was not self-sufficient in water. Today, two-thirds of India’s aquifers are running dry, and even according to government statistics, 90,000 villages do not have water.”

Even for those who think it is an important meeting, post-Rio wisdom has washed away any optimism for Johannesburg. “The North wants to keep quiet because action at Johannesburg would mean a radical change in the consumerist lifestyles of its people,” says Dr Chaudhury of the UN Secretary General’s committee for the Johannesburg Summit. “If Johannesburg can help ignite a million mutinies all over, to change the way people live, it will be a success.”

At the core of India’s agenda is an awareness that the country needs to get ahead with its own development plans. “WSSD for us is incidental, we are working anyway on a national strategy for sustainable development,” says Secretary Jayakrishnan. In effect, Johannesburg has made India review its progress since Rio and catalysed the build-up of a clear, national blueprint to bring sustainable development into the mainstream of Indian society.

People quoted in this report:

T. R. Baalu, Union Minister for Environment and Forests
Kamla Chaudhury, former chairperson of the Wastelands Development Board, Government of India, and a member of the WSSD Secretary General’s committee
Pradipto Ghosh, Additional Secretary to the Prime Minister on the economic and social sector including the environment
P. V. Jayakrishnan, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India
Ashish Kothari, founder of the environment action group Kalpavriksh and Coordinator, Technical and Policy Core Group of the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan
R. K. Pachauri, Director General of Tata Energy Research Institute, and recently elected Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change
Rajendra Singh, the chief of TBS (Young India Society)
Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Prime Minister of India
Japan lacks a convincing vision of a sustainable Japan. This is despite significant progress in propagating the concept of sustainability, and some technology-based fixes to regulate and improve the environmental performance of industries and infrastructure projects.

Japan’s business sector seems relatively uninspired by sustainability. But despite this, industry is slowly becoming greener as Japan boasts the world’s highest number of companies that carry the good environmental performance standard ISO 14001.

Politically, Japan has established an environment ministry and many domestic measures have been introduced. An array of recycling legislation, climate change and an environmental impact assessment law are on the books, while a carbon tax is being debated. Japan has also ratified the Kyoto Protocol and the biodiversity convention.

Environmental NGOs have matured since Rio – strengthened by their engagement in the Kyoto process. However, there is very limited civil society interest in the Johannesburg Summit. Some of the reasons for this are: the distance and cost of travel to the venue is prohibitive for many; the summit is focusing on Africa, which is not traditionally a major area of Japanese engagement.
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND JAPAN

Like the rest of the world, Japan is struggling to define sustainable development in practical terms. This challenge is particularly acute given that Japan has the undesirable distinction of being one of the most unsustainable nations in the world, using 4.77 hectares per person compared with 2.3 hectares on average – per capita.

Japan’s answer to this is technological innovation over radical reform. Technological solutions often provide the path of least resistance, allowing a modified status quo to continue. For example, Japan has improved the incineration and processing of waste to ease landfill pressures, rather than taking aggressive measures to reduce the overall quantity produced. Another example is an Environment White Paper published in May 2002, which focuses on the "Incipient Creation of a Sustainable Society". It calls for a boost in eco-efficiency, maintaining GDP while reducing environmental impacts through improved technology.

“When the government talks about sustainable development it is generally talking about sustainable development, not sustainable development,” says Tai Harada, a researcher at the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology. “Those in the Environment Ministry mean development that is environmentally maintainable, but those in the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry mean sustainable economic growth.”

While many in Japan turn to technology, others look to history for an image of what a sustainable society might be. The Environment White Paper recalls that prior to being pried open by the West 150 years ago, Japan’s former capital Edo was the epitome of a recycling society: a closed society with a closed resource cycle.

Optimism aside, most in Japan hesitate before suggesting when Japan might achieve sustainability. One who dares is Saburo Kato, a former Environment Agency official who attended the 1972 and 1992 Earth Summits before retiring to start an NGO, the Japan Association of Environment and Society for the 21st Century. He predicts that by 2030 Japan will be well on its way:

"Japan is far from sustainability right now, but the process is starting to bud. A sense of the environmental crisis we face is beginning to be shared by society as a whole. We need political leadership and we need economic measures, such as environmental taxes, to be introduced. Once they are, things will start to move and this bud will burst into full bloom. I think we will be in a good position by about 2030."

PROGRESS SINCE RIO

Government
Japan has taken great strides towards reconciling the environment and development, but it has much further to go. The government has yet to sketch a long-term blueprint for achieving sustainability, opting to tackle problems on an ad hoc basis rather than holistically. No NGO or government entity is planning to produce a critical crosscutting review of the past 10 years, although a country profile is available via the Internet (http://www.un.org/esa/agenda21/natlinfo/cp2002.htm or http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/prep_process/natlassessrep.html). Instead,
reports of success stories, piece-meal reviews and proposals in select areas of expertise will be presented at domestic symposia or as side events in Johannesburg.

The decade has seen a spate of environmental legislation and strengthened administrative mechanisms – for example, by promoting recycling, reducing dioxins, cutting greenhouse gas emissions and soil contamination. On paper things are looking up, but little has changed in real terms. "The image and laws might exist, but environmental considerations are not integrated into economic policy," contends Miwako Kurosaka of Japan's Committee for Sustainable Development. The environment often takes a back seat to development and industry.

**Environment ministry**
A major change since 1992 is the creation of an Environment Ministry in 2001, superseding the 30-year-old Environment Agency.

While this is clearly a step in the right direction, the move may initially have weakened the newborn ministry. The former agency, positioned within the Prime Minister's Office, was insulated from ministerial turf wars. Now it is a small ministry playing in a larger pond. With a staff of fewer than 1000, its ability to influence policy is limited. In addition, lawmakers feel more allegiance to the larger and politically more important ministries, which wield larger budgets, such as agriculture or the economy, trade and industry.

In 2000 the Second Basic Environment Plan identified 11 priority areas for Japan: global warming measures, recycling, easing the impact of automobiles, protecting the water cycle, chemical measures, preservation of biodiversity, environmental education, greening society, pushing environmental investment, promotion of regional measures, and contributing to environmental improvement internationally.

Critics point out that this is essentially a compilation of existing government plans, lacking numerical goals and a detailed implementation framework. For example, the plan is supposed to contain a mechanism to ensure that other ministries integrate environmental considerations into their activities. The Environment Ministry should then report its conclusions to the Diet. However, this year not one ministry submitted an environmental evaluation of its policies.

**Traffic pollution**
Though many pollution issues have been resolved, urban air pollution, particularly from diesel engines, and noise pollution along roads remain persistent problems. The Environment Ministry now includes suspended particulate matter – the soot in diesel exhaust – in a law designed to clean up air in urban areas. The government is also planning to enact stricter emission limits for new diesel vehicles in 2005.

The government has also committed to replacing its fleet of conventional vehicles with low-emission automobiles by 2005, and is looking to purchase one of the first fuel cell vehicles to roll off the assembly lines later this year.

**Waste and recycling**
Recycling has burst on to Japan's policy screen in a big way since Rio. With limited space and lots of waste, Japan's landfills are close to full. Japan burns more than 75 per cent of its waste.

Japan's Basic Law for Establishing a Recycling-based Society, legislates for disposal of containers, home appliances, food, construction materials and automobiles. The
goal is to reduce waste going to landfills by 50 per cent of 1996 levels by 2010 and 90 per cent by 2050.

However, critics point out that promoting recycling and incinerating waste more efficiently are not the same as cutting consumption.

**Chemicals**
Japan has signed an international treaty to eradicate 12 Persistent Organic Pollutants. Domestic measures are in place to reduce levels of carcinogenic dioxins that are created by waste incineration, and to speed up the destruction of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Japan is in the vanguard of research into such endocrine disrupting chemicals.

However, Japan is opposed to the draft text for the Johannesburg Summit proposing to “reduce adverse effects (of chemicals on health) by 2020”. This is because of the ambiguity of what chemicals this might include, according to Foreign Ministry officials.

**Industry**
The daunting goal of selling sustainability to business falls to the Environment Ministry's environment and economy division. The division, which promotes environmental reporting and environmental accounting, is slowly making headway. For example, Japan leads the world in the number of companies certified by the International Organization for Standardization's ISO 14001 standard. Some leading companies have promised to reduce their carbon emissions. One such company is the parcel delivery service, Sagawa Express. Sagawa has committed to trimming the carbon dioxide emissions from its transport fleet in line with the national objective of a six per cent cut by 2012.

One of the biggest challenges for governments worldwide is to convince industry that sustainability won't cost the earth. In Japan, the government has sponsored studies, which show that greenhouse gas emissions can be cut at little or no cost. Moreover, it is promoting the benefits of emissions trading and has introduced a mock trading system to familiarize companies with the practice.

The government is also keen on plans for a carbon tax. In June 2002, the Environment Ministry outlined three types of taxes to cut greenhouse emissions, to mixed reviews. Observers believe that such a tax could be introduced in 2005 and would help set the tone for similar moves in the future.

**Civil society**
Japan's civil society is a transformed one since the Rio Summit of 1992, when groups were largely isolated from the global NGO scene. Many argue that Japan’s decision to host the Kyoto Protocol negotiations five years later helped NGOs to mature further and to deepen their international networking. The extent to which NGOs are part of everyday Japanese life is illustrated by a 1998 poll that found that 81 per cent of nearly 4600 consumer groups were interested in the environment.

Before Rio, Japan’s NGOs were largely run by experienced campaigners – such as university professors – who were experts in specific environmental areas. Today’s NGOs are richer and possibly more tame, according to Miwako Kurosaka of Japan’s Committee for Sustainable Development.
Citizen-led initiatives are now well established in Japan’s social landscape, and include energy-generating windmills and eco-money schemes. Local governments, too, are much more environmentally-aware than in the past. All 47 of the nation’s prefectures and 12 large cities have drawn up local Agenda 21 plans – though only 184 out of more than 3000 municipalities have finalised plans.

Forward-looking municipalities are introducing waste taxes and other innovative levies: businesses in central Tokyo, for example, need to pay to have their waste collected. One central Tokyo municipality made waves earlier this year by announcing it would tax plastic bags given to customers in supermarkets. Taxes being introduced by local governments to prevent an influx of industrial waste from surrounding areas is forcing the government to rethink its waste management law.

**International agreements**

Japan cares deeply about climate change. This is partly because its average temperatures are rising faster than the global average. It is also because 90 per cent of its beaches are threatened by sea level rise, and because the Kyoto Protocol was famously forged in Japan in December 1997. However, despite its passion for climate, Japan has some way to go before realizing its Kyoto commitments to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by six per cent from 1990 levels before 2012.

The cabinet ratified the Kyoto Protocol on 4 June 2002, raising hopes that Japan will crack down on greenhouse gas emissions, and increasing the possibility that the protocol would come into force this year. However, Japan’s emissions have actually increased by eight per cent since 1990.

In order to get back on track, the government is planning a new national Kyoto implementation plan, which will rely on voluntary emissions reduction efforts from industry and citizens. Furthermore, in July 2002, the central government committed to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from government offices by seven per cent of 2001 levels before 2006. Although the government only contributes 0.2 per cent of the nation’s total emissions, officials hope this effort will spur other sectors to action and demonstrate that emission cuts are possible.

In addition to climate change Japan has also pushed ahead with policies to protect biodiversity. The 1993 law for the Conservation of Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora was followed in March 2002 by the Second Biodiversity Strategy. This strategy includes preventive measures to keep species off the endangered list, and to protect the environment from destruction by development and invasive species.

However, nature protection groups point out that only two per cent of the 2600+ plants and animals listed in the nation’s Red Data Book of threatened species are actually protected. Listing a species in the Red Data Book requires cabinet approval, which is one reason why so few have been included. Critics believe that the cabinet gives lower priority to endangered habitats compared to roads or industrial projects.

Nonetheless, conservation is slowly rising up the public and political agenda, which is having an impact on large-scale development schemes. Thanks to public pressure and the 1997 Environmental Impact Assessment law, few of these projects have been abandoned or delayed. This was almost unimaginable in the 1980s.

For example, Nagoya city abandoned a plan to turn the Fujimae tidal flats, a major stopover for migratory birds, into a landfill site in 1999. Wetlands protection has
turned out to be one of Japan’s conservation success stories. Japan has now compiled an inventory of its 500 most important wetlands and is committed to increasing the number of sites that are internationally registered and nationally protected. A programme begins this year to repair wetlands damaged by past public works projects.

Conservation concerns, nonetheless, have had little impact on many more controversial public works projects. For example, a new airport on Ishigaki Island in Okinawa Prefecture threatens more than 200 species of coastal coral. Similarly, a planned US military air facility off Okinawa’s main island may destroy seagrass beds that support endangered dugongs. And the central government and Okinawan authorities are pushing ahead with a plan to reclaim Awase tidal flats – listed as one of the nation’s 500 most important wetlands – to build a resort and convention centre despite it being home to unique and endangered plant life. This is despite considerable local and international opposition.

Japan is justly proud of its laudable record as the world’s top dispenser of Official Development Assistance (ODA) during the 1990s. However, this year it appears it will cede that spot to the US, possibly slipping further down the list. ODA fell by about 10 per cent in 2001, even though it has consistently been around 0.2 and 0.3 per cent of GNP. A key reason for this is Japan’s decade-long economic slump.

Environmental ODA, however, is not expected to be cut. But requests from developing countries for increased financial assistance promise to make ODA a contentious issue in Johannesburg, as do demands for more transparency and an increased role for non-governmental actors in ODA-related decisions.

Development assistance itself is a hugely contentious issue. Developing countries and some NGOs call for an increase in aid – in line with the Rio pledge of 0.7 per cent of GNP. Others, however, contend that the problem is not the amount, but the way it is used. "The government needs to work more intimately with NGOs. If ODA were doubled right now I have my doubts that it would be well spent. I actually think it would be a bit dangerous," says Satoru Matsumoto of Mekong Watch Japan. The bulk of Japan's ODA goes to construction projects, when more of it should be funnelled to social services, he adds.

Matsumoto and others are calling on the government to establish a mechanism for disaffected residents in developing countries to seek recourse or mediation when they feel they are being slighted by Japan-funded projects. Side events at the Johannesburg Summit are expected to address this issue.

**AGENDAS FOR THE SUMMIT**

In contrast to the run-up to the Rio and Kyoto Summits, Japan’s government, civil society and the press have largely been silent during the build-up to Johannesburg. Industry too is unsure of its place, despite being active in preparations for Rio. This state of paralysis is exemplified by the fact that the Japan Business Federation is still debating whether or not to host a side event in Johannesburg.

Tai Harada remembers the atmosphere in the run-up to Rio: "Ten years ago it was the first time for people to meet and discuss these problems at such a high level. There was a lot of energy. There were treaties under discussion... But 10 years later, what do we have to show?"
Many echo these sentiments. Smaller NGOs and newspapers – even specialist environmental publications – will not be present at Johannesburg, an event they regard as having little practical value, and which is difficult and expensive to reach. If the venue were closer, it might have been different: “Japan has a sense of responsibility for Indonesia and China so it might have been able to do more,” says Miwako Kurosaka.

Moreover, poverty, one of Johannesburg’s central themes, is not something that resonates greatly with many in Japan. The chapter on “Combating Poverty” in Japan’s country profile, which it submitted for the summit, is perhaps the shortest of the paper’s 40 chapters.

Civil society
The run-up to the Johannesburg Summit has been characterized by a lack of coordination among NGOs. One reason for this may be the fact that – unlike at Rio – the government now works closely with some NGOs, but not others. This mirrors the situation in other countries, and inevitably leads to friction among the civil society sector with some groups accusing others of selling out.

NGOs who appear to have found favour with the government include Japan’s Committee for Sustainable Development, which has been asked by the government to compile a paper on environmental success stories and local initiatives in Japan since Rio, an English version of which should at the summit. The government also plans to include NGO representatives in the government delegation to Johannesburg. Meanwhile, the Japan Forum for Johannesburg, a state-funded association of NGOs has found its proposal for a decade of sustainable development education, has found its way into the Chairman’s text for Johannesburg.

Government
Japan’s official preparations for the Johannesburg Summit have been led by the Environment Ministry. The ministry has promised four Type 2 partnership arrangements. These include a biodiversity preservation project network for the Asia-Pacific region, as well as a project already underway to monitor the environment of China and its Southeast Asian neighbours. Other ministries have floated proposals focusing on technology, such as global mapping and global monitoring initiatives to help in early detection of wildfires and climate abnormalities, as well as an Asia Forest Partnership that will facilitate cooperation in preventing illegal logging and forest fires.

The size and composition of Japan’s government delegation remains unclear. The government is planning a 100-strong delegation led by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi. But environment minister Hiroshi Ohki has said that Japan is unlikely to complete its list until August. Ohki has also controversially said that he hopes to use the summit to discuss how developing countries might contribute to tackling climate change.

Japan remains opposed to setting an international numerical target for boosting renewable energy, although a domestic target exists of three per cent (seven per cent including large scale hydro-power) by 2010.

Likewise, Japan is reticent about promising to reduce damage from harmful chemicals or restoring fish stocks by 2020 because the standards used to measure these and actions they might require could translate into burdens in the future. In addition, it is wary of incorporating the phrase “common but differentiated responsibilities” into development related areas.
“This phrase was used in the Rio agreements, but this was in regard to environmental issues. Now developing countries want to broaden it to encompass development issues. We are not sure that is appropriate and think it requires careful discussion,” said one Foreign Ministry official.

Japan has the potential to hinder or help forge new agreements in Johannesburg. How its position will play out depends on many factors, including how the United States and developing countries come out of the gate, and whether the media can fan the flames of interest among the public at home.

Box
Japan’s Major Legal and Administrative Achievements

- Law Concerning the Promotion of Measures to Cope with Global Warming, established 1998, revised 2002
- National Strategy of Japan on Biological Diversity, formulated in 1995, revised in 2002
- Basic Law for Establishing a Recycling-based Society, established 2000; a basic plan to support the law is to be completed in 2003
- Law Concerning the Rational Use of Energy, revised in 1998
- Japan Center for Climate Change Actions, set up in July 1999
- Basic Environment Law, enacted in 1993; supported by a Basic Environment Plan established in 1994 and reviewed in 2000 that outlines long-term environmental measures.
- Information Disclosure Act, enforced from 2001
- Law on Promoting Green Purchasing, set up in 2000
- Institute for Global Environmental Strategies, established 1996
- Environmental Impact Assessment Law, established in 1997, fully operational in 1999
- Law Concerning Special Measures against Dioxins
- Strategic Programmes on Environment Endocrine Disrupters ’98, set up in 1998, revised in 2000
- The Law Concerning the Protection of the Ozone Layer through the Control of Specified Substances
- The Law Concerning the Recovery and Destruction of Fluorocarbons, established 2001
- The Law Concerning Special Measures for Total Emission Reduction of Nitrogen Oxides from Automobiles in Specified Areas
- Pollutant Release and Transfer Register Law promulgated in 1999
- Specific Household Appliance Recycling Act, enacted in 1998
- Automobile Recycling Law, established 2002

People quoted in this report:

Tai Harada, a researcher at the National Institute of Advanced Industrial Science and Technology
Saburo Kato, a former government official who founded an NGO, the Japan Association of Environment and Society for the 21st Century
Miwako Kurosaka, of Japan’s Committee for Sustainable Development
Satoru Matsumoto of Mekong Watch Japan
Hiroshi Ohki, environment minister
World summit host nations traditionally opt for the role of peacemaker. Their aim is to find common ground and consensus and to push the negotiations towards a successful outcome. Not so South Africa. The government has chosen to take a clear line on how it views the Johannesburg Summit and what it thinks the summit’s priorities should be.

The government has promised to make poverty eradication, debt relief and equitable terms of world trade the focus of its Johannesburg efforts. These are issues close to its heart. Conservation and environmental protection are in second place. South Africa had a rare opportunity to incorporate sustainability into its post-Apartheid development plans. Unfortunately, this has not happened and progress on its Rio commitments on the whole has been slow and patchy.
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SOUTH AFRICA

Sustainable development for most South Africans means getting out of the daily struggle for survival. As of February 2002, 6 million (out of approximately 41 million) South Africans had no access to piped water and 4 million were without access to electricity. Only half the population has use of flush toilets and 42 per cent have no access to any form of refuse collection. Sustainable development is about access to water, food security, healthcare, energy, employment opportunities, debt relief, more development assistance and getting a better deal in world trade.

PROGRESS SINCE RIO

International conventions
On the positive side South Africa has signed (but not necessarily ratified) most of the environmental conventions and treaties that have emerged since the Stockholm environment summit of 1972. These include: Agenda 21; Basel Convention; Montreal Protocol phasing out ozone-depleting substances; Climate Change Convention; the Kyoto Protocol, the Convention on Desertification, Biodiversity Convention, and the Ramsar Convention on wetlands.

New national laws
In addition, several new laws have been passed since the Rio Earth Summit. These include the National Environmental Management Act, the National Water Act and the Development Framework Act.

The National Environmental Management Act was a groundbreaking act for South Africa, given its history of Apartheid, inequality and discrimination. For example it states that: “environmental justice must be pursued so that adverse environmental impacts shall not be distributed in such a manner as to unfairly discriminate against any person, particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged persons.” The act also provides protection for whistle-blowers and it provides *locus standi* for any individual to take legal action on behalf of environmental protection, i.e. any person can take legal action against a polluter, even if that person is not directly affected by the polluter. This allows NGOs to take legal action on behalf of affected communities.

The National Water Act also reflects South Africa’s transition to democracy by recognizing that water is a national asset to which all South Africans have equal right of access. The act also establishes water catchment areas with catchment committees, which include both commercial farmers, subsistence farmers and land tenants, thereby ending the monopoly which commercial farmers had over water resources.

South Africa is also committed to phasing in lead-free fuel by 2006.

Since 1997, moreover, environmental impact assessments have been a legal requirement in South Africa for almost all new developments (or expansions of existing infrastructure) which may have an impact on the environment.

Many South African companies have achieved and/or are seeking to achieve ISO 14001 certification (which is an international code on achieving improvements in environmental management within individual companies). There has also been an increase in environmental reporting and auditing by South African corporations.
What needs to be done
So much for the good news. On the downside, the enforcement of many of the conventions and agreements that have been signed and/or ratified is proceeding too slowly. For example, no legislation or regulations have been promulgated to implement or enforce the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes, and South Africa has only ever produced one annual report for the Basel Secretariat. Information from the South African government on approvals it has granted for the import or export of hazardous wastes is almost non-existent.

Similarly, South Africa has made perilously little progress in implementing a national sustainable development strategy and Agenda 21 initiatives at the local government level. In addition, the absence of a renewable energy strategy means that South Africa is almost entirely reliant on fossil fuels for energy. South Africa’s national electricity provider, a public company, Eskom, has recently embarked on two pilot projects involving renewable energy. One is a wind farm and the other is a solar dish-engine system called the Eskom Dish Sterling Project. Once these two projects are up and running, the economic viability of replicating them will be determined. Eskom will be a prominent player at WSSD and is planning to showcase these two pilot projects there. Otherwise, South Africa has an abundant (and therefore cheap) supply of coal, and coal power stations are the only large-scale source of energy in South Africa.

This lack of enthusiasm for sustainability may stem from the fact that environmental protection is generally considered by the public and the government to be a hindrance to the development process, economic growth and job creation. There seems a failure on the part of government and business to recognize the vast economic and social benefits that can be gained from protecting the environment, in contrast to the huge economic, health and social costs incurred by exploiting and degrading the environment.

Many large corporations certainly seem to think environmental measures are an obstacle. Multinational corporations, such as Shell and BP, which operate in South Africa, observe much lower environmental standards than in their home countries. For example the oil refineries in South Africa which are owned and operated by Shell, BP and Caltex produce far greater emissions than do the refineries in these corporations’ home countries.

AGENDAS FOR THE SUMMIT

Government
The South African government may have shown little enthusiasm for its Rio commitments. But it is at the centre of the global debate on addressing world poverty and rewriting the terms of world trade. The government has made no secret of the fact that it wants the Johannesburg Summit to focus on these issues, much to the chagrin of policymakers in capitals of rich countries who are keen not to lose the summit’s essentially environmental focus.

South Africa is committed to the Millennium Development Goals – halve the numbers of people living in poverty by 2015, provide access to food security, clean water, sanitation and renewable energy. A parallel priority is the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), in which Africa can apply for soft loans and other development assistance from richer countries in exchange for upholding good governance, democracy and human rights.
An African ministerial statement released on 18 October 2001 stated that NEPAD was the framework which should drive the sustainable development agenda in Africa, and that NEPAD would provide the basis for Africa’s response to issues arising from WSSD. The Environmental Initiative within NEPAD has identified eight sub-themes: wetlands, biodiversity, desertification, global warming, alien invader plants, cross-border conservation areas, environmental governance and financing. Issues dealing with urban areas, mining pollution, industrial pollution, and toxic waste are not dealt with at all.

In a speech to Parliament in April 2002, the Director General of the South African Department of Environmental Affairs, Crispin Olver, said that South Africa’s objectives for the summit included promoting NEPAD as the framework for sustainable development in Africa and achieving an action-oriented programme for the Johannesburg Summit.

Valli Moosa, South Africa’s Minister of Environmental Affairs, is leading preparations for the summit. During a speech to Parliament in June 2002 he underlined the government’s view by saying:

“Poverty eradication should be the central focus of the summit. At PrepCom 4 there was less agreement on the financing of sustainable development and on measures that would promote economic development.

“Without economic growth, sustainable development is unsustainable. Some of the biggest obstacles to poverty eradication are unsustainable levels of national debt, the lack of a fair and equitable global trade regime, and the lack of market access. Producers in poor countries, especially farmers, are not able to sell their produce to consumers in rich countries because of agricultural subsidies in developed countries.

“Today, developing countries lose far more as a result of trade barriers than they gain in the form of aid. While some of these matters must be negotiated in the World Trade Organization, a summit on sustainable development cannot be silent on such obstacles to poverty eradication.”

Civil society
In addition to the challenges identified by government, representatives of civil society all agree on the need for improved democratic environmental governance – including better corporate regulation and enforcement of those regulations when it comes to activities such as pollution, toxics, wastes and chemical management. These issues have not been identified as priority issues by the government.

However, NGOs differ on the relative merits of other issues such as the need for tighter corporate accountability; the need for UN reform; whether debt should be repaid by former colonial powers; the merits of partnerships between civil society, governments and business for sustainable development – some see this as “privatization” of sustainable development; and the legacy of environmental racism (which sees polluting industries and toxic waste sites being located adjacent to residential areas of people of colour).

There is also considerable debate about the merits of NEPAD. Many organizations point to the fact that there was little public consultation prior to NEPAD becoming official policy. Others disagree with the principle of aid with conditions that are set by outsiders.
**Business**
The South Africa Business Coordinating Forum is more or less aligning itself with the government’s views. Members are calling for some of “the more fundamental macroeconomic causes of poverty” such as “debt, terms of trade and inadequate financial flows from North to South” to be addressed.

South Africa’s industries are also pushing for voluntary agreements on pollution reduction as opposed to stronger environmental laws or enforceable standards. Industries, in particular the oil and chemical industries, are asking the government for financial rewards (incentives) for voluntarily agreeing to reduce their pollution levels to acceptable standards.

**PARTICIPATION IN THE SUMMIT**

**Government and civil society**
The Johannesburg Summit process is being driven by the Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism. Valli Moosa is the department’s minister. A separate company (Jowsco) has been formed to actually handle summit logistics.

A large number of South African civil society organizations have joined together under the umbrella of the South Africa NGO Coalition (SANGOCO) to form the WSSD Civil Society Multi-Stakeholder Forum. SANGOCO is housing the secretariat for the forum, and SANGOCO President Zakes Hlatshwayo is CEO of the secretariat. The forum comprises seven sectors, namely women, NGOs, youth, labour, disabled, interfaith and civic organizations. See their web page at: [www.worldsummit.org.za](http://www.worldsummit.org.za).

Other NGOs engaged in the WSSD process include:

South Africa’s trade unions COSATU, FEDUSA and NACTU; the Wildlife and Environment Society of South Africa (WESSA); the South African Council of Churches (SACC) which has prepared a document for WSSD entitled “This is God’s Earth”; GroundWork, a small NGO which has teamed up with international organizations to focus on corporate accountability at the WSSD. See their plans for WSSD at [www.groundwork.org.za](http://www.groundwork.org.za).

**Business**
Business involvement in the Johannesburg Summit is being coordinated by the Business Co-ordinating Forum for the Johannesburg Summit. The forum functions under the auspices of the International Chamber of Commerce South Africa, and claims to comprise representatives of all the major business organizations in South Africa. The stated goal of the Business Co-ordinating Forum (BCF) is: “to co-ordinate and promote business initiatives in the preparations towards the summit, in a manner that ensures that the hosting of the summit complements other initiatives in promoting the image of South Africa abroad.” The chamber’s secretariat has provided the secretariat for the forum. The forum’s chair is Tokyo Sexwale, with Reuel Khoza of Eskom as the alternate chair. More on the BCF at: [www.sacob.co.za/BCF/BusCF/default.htm](http://www.sacob.co.za/BCF/BusCF/default.htm).

Another key player is the Business Council for Sustainable Development, South Africa. Website is at [www.ief.co.za](http://www.ief.co.za). South African business organizations have organized a South African Business Week to take place from 30 August to 2 September at Gallagher Estate in Midrand, outside Johannesburg. This is an officially accredited side event of the WSSD. More at [www.sabusinessweek.co.za](http://www.sabusinessweek.co.za).
People quoted in this report:

Valli Moosa, South Africa's Minister of Environmental Affairs
Crispin Olver, Director General of the South African Department of Environmental Affairs
Tanzania has made little practical headway in its Rio commitments since 1992. There is little evidence of sustainability in its development planning and the country's preparations for Johannesburg are patchy and uncoordinated. This may be partly because Tanzania relies heavily on assistance from international banks and development agencies. Sustainability is not one of the many conditions they attach to grants and loans. The collapse of commodity prices coupled with market liberalization has worsened poverty in this already severely impoverished country.
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND TANZANIA

A decade after the Rio Summit, Tanzania, like many countries, lacks a concerted vision of how to implement sustainable development, though there is broad agreement on what the concept means for Tanzania.

“The priority for Tanzania is poverty eradication. We need sustainable programmes which will improve the welfare of people in terms of increasing their incomes, improving living standards without destroying the environment,” says Loyce Lema of the NGO Envirocare.

George Kajembe, a professor at the Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro, says natural resources are the basis for sustainable development in Tanzania. “Rural people who are over 90 per cent of the population must receive greater economic benefits from conserving natural resources than from degrading them,” he says.

For Seithy Chachage, a professor of sociology at the University of Dar es Salaam, sustainable development should go beyond economics: “It is better if we talk about development that is more or less centring on how to make people live a life which is worthwhile living in terms of being devoid of arbitrariness, oppression, ignorance, domination and all those kind of things.”

To ordinary villagers, sustainable development amounts to food and cash-crop production. Many argue that modern farming with chemical inputs is not sustainable because it enslaves them to the chemicals companies. Rev Amon Mwasuka, a small tea-farmer in Mbeya region, says sustainable development is the wise production of goods and utilization of natural resources to meet present and future needs while at the same time efforts are made to conserve the environment.

PROGRESS SINCE RIO

Environment
Tanzania has taken several steps to implement the Rio agreements of 1992, at national and international levels.

The government has signed and ratified several global and regional environmental conventions. These include UN conventions on climate change, biodiversity, trade in endangered species, protection of wetlands, combating desertification; and the regional Nairobi Convention for protection of the coastal and marine environment. It adopted the Forest Principles. New protected areas have been designated under the Ramsar wetlands convention (Lake Natron and the Malagarasi-Moyowosi wetlands) and the UN’s Man and the Biosphere programme (the Eastern Arc Mountain Forests ecosystems – among the world’s 25 biodiversity hotspots).

Actions at national level include:
In March 1993 the government translated Agenda 21 into what it calls a national development agenda. Four years later it prepared a National Environmental Policy. During the late 1990s the government of Tanzania embarked on a national tree planting campaign; this had the dual aims of addressing deforestation as well as desertification.
In 1998 a new forest policy recognized the rights of different stakeholders to participate in decisions on the management of forest resources. The 1998 Wildlife Policy included the management of wetlands’ ecosystems.

A Directorate of the Environment was established in the Vice President’s Office. The institutional framework and scope of its responsibilities are not yet clear, but its tasks include coordination of the preparations and national report for WSSD. The new directorate is in addition to the previously established National Environment Management Council.


Poverty

While economic liberalization in the 1990s clearly benefited some sectors of society, it had devastating impacts on the rural poor – some 90 per cent of the population. What seems to have hurt most farmers and their families was the double blow of losing agricultural subsidies, and then having to sell their cash crops such as cotton and coffee at prices that seemed to be in perpetual decline in international markets. With export crops no longer profitable, farmers are now reverting to produce what they can sell locally.

Tanzania qualifies for debt relief under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative. The government of President Benjamin Mkapa says it is committed to eradicating poverty and is engaged in a number of different poverty reduction initiatives. Sustainable development is a target for some of them. The President has formed a special division for poverty eradication in the Vice President’s Office. The target is to reduce abject poverty by 50 per cent by 2010 with total eradication of abject poverty by 2025.

The government has also adopted what it calls “Development Vision 2025”, as well as a rural development strategy with short and medium-term goals for sustainable development in rural areas. The Development Vision is a statement of where the government wants to see Tanzania’s development by 2025: a high quality of livelihood, good governance through the rule of law, and a strong and competitive economy.

A Poverty Reduction Strategy was developed in 2000, a condition for Tanzania to access debt relief and loans from the IMF and World Bank. The strategy includes new investment in education, including abolishing fees for primary schooling; improving access to healthcare; and an agricultural strategy, which for the first time addresses small as well as large-scale farmers, and subsistence as well as cash crops. Diversification and rural infrastructure such as roads are also highlighted. Sustainability is being incorporated into the strategy.

FAILURES SINCE RIO

Despite some steps being taken, many Tanzanians feel that the country has made little tangible progress. Absence of coordinated government policies on sustainable development is a key concern. As in many countries, different parts of the executive seem unaware of what the other is doing. Christina Sanyo, Acting Director of the
government’s department of Planning and Privatization says lack of joined-up government is a direct cause of Tanzania’s failure to implement its Rio commitments. One underlying problem is the existence of the two national bodies, the Division of Environment in the Vice President’s Office and the National Environment Management Council, with no clear allocation of responsibility between them.

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**Box WHEN AID GOES WRONG**

Most donor-funded development projects usually bring with them plenty of funds and generous helpings of goodwill from concerned citizens overseas. But often these can be the least important ingredients if a project is to work and survive long after the last consultant has left for home.

One example of this is a Japan-funded rice irrigation project in the Kilimanjaro region of Kahe.

Research by the NGO Envirocare shows that Kahe used to be an evergreen area. Today, it is dry, dusty and trees have been largely depleted. Poverty was rare, but most Kahe families today suffer from high levels of unemployment and infant malnourishment.

How did this happen?

Japan’s International Development Agency, in collaboration with the Tanzanian government, decided to fund a scheme that would irrigate rice paddy-fields by diverting a nearby river. The programme had noble goals: raise food production and provide social services to surrounding communities.

Unfortunately, it also had the effect of impoverishing members of the Kahe community for whom the river was a permanent source of water and of livelihoods through fishing and irrigation of small paddy farms and vegetables. When they rose to complain, residents were told by the authorities that regardless of historical use, they had no rights to the water.

The Japanese-funded Lower Moshe project was handed over to local farmers, but has failed to produce adequate rice for feeding the local population. The project was unsuccessful because there was a lack of community involvement: Kahe residents did not see the project as belonging to them.

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Policies have been introduced but they remain rather abstract. There has been little national environmental legislation in the previous decade. “Tanzania has not yet fulfilled her promise under Principle 11 of the Rio Declaration relating to enacting a comprehensive national environmental law and putting in place environmental standards,” says Melchisedeck Sangali Lutema, a lawyer working with the NGO Lawyers Environmental Action Team (LEAT).

Lack of clear leadership on sustainable development has led to a lack of information sharing among key stakeholders, and failure to integrate sustainable development into decision-making processes. According to Rose Kalemera of SwissAid, “The three branches that handle environmental management issues: central government, sectoral ministry level and local level, have not yet established a strong coordination framework. [The set-up is] a top-down management style, mainly donor driven, which could end up badly.”

“There are no environmental standards in place or procedures or binding guidelines and specific criteria for the conduct of environmental impact assessment,” says Robert Makaramba, former senior lecturer in law at the University of Dar es Salaam. “As a result, environmental considerations are not integrated into decision-making processes.”
Nor has the government made a concerted attempt to make Agenda 21 a priority for local authorities or a reality for ordinary people. Loyce Lema says that “the Rio resolutions were only disseminated to people at the top, and the majority of people in rural areas remained blind to them, most people in Tanzania have never heard about Agenda 21.”

Even the flagship National Tree Planting Campaign – for which the government was widely congratulated – has not been wholly successful. Trees were planted nationwide, with emphasis on “value” trees – which bear edible fruit and have a wide canopy to provide shade – says Lema. But most of the trees have died, she adds. Reasons for this include use of inappropriate exotic types of tree, trees planted in inappropriate places, little institutional infrastructure to monitor the scheme and prolonged drought in many parts. Conservation of forest areas is still not included in sectoral and local development policies.

Other Agenda 21 initiatives which have not been very successfully implemented include a scheme to improve the quality and supply of freshwater resources, and a plan to improve the efficiency of river basin irrigation schemes. Little progress has been made also in management of land resources; sustainable exploitation of mineral resources; protecting the atmosphere, and coastal management.

**AGENDAS FOR THE SUMMIT**

**Civil society**
Many of the challenges for Tanzania to achieve sustainable development are internal. Addressing poverty is the top priority, but for a start, says Rose Kalemera of the NGO SwissAid, “we must give our natural resources their rightful place in our development thinking.”

Many argue that sustainable agriculture should be a priority, as it will meet the twin goals of poverty alleviation and rural food security. Agriculture employs more than 80 per cent of Tanzania’s rural population, and is an important source of foreign exchange thanks to cash crops such as cotton, coffee, cashew nuts, tea and sisal. However there has been poor support for agriculture, and drops in commodity prices have hit the sector hard.

A second priority is education, which is seen as critical to improving quality of life through knowledge and skills. Education is also key to environmental awareness, access to information on human rights, globalization and other issues.

Other priorities include access to clean water. According to journalist James Mpinga, in many places people buy commercial bottled water to drink, which costs as much as petrol. Another journalist, Sydney Kwiyamba, says, “mismanagement of wetlands had led to water scarcity in most parts of the country. Wetlands such as Usangu are fast deteriorating because little has been done to protect catchment areas.” Tanzania’s priorities also include better health services and alternative energy sources. Ninety per cent of Tanzanians in rural areas depend on firewood, because electricity is unavailable or too expensive.

In Prof Kajembe’s view, the main purpose of the summit is to try to audit what has happened in the last 10 years and chart the way forward: “Tanzania should try to use the summit first to audit her own achievements but also ……to compare her
achievements with other countries, to see whether the country is progressing positively or otherwise.”

**Business**
Ten years after Rio, Tanzania’s private sector remains a bit-part player in sustainable development, according to Asumile Kajuni, a senior official from the Tanzania office of the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The vast majority of small businesses remain unaware of the Johannesburg Summit, nor are they familiar with terms such as Agenda 21.

**Government**
The Director of Environment in the Vice President’s Office is Erick Mugurusi. He says the government has made strenuous efforts in preparation for the Johannesburg Summit, but is constrained by a lack of money. He says the government has listed priorities to be tabled at the summit. "Poverty issues are top of the agenda and the government will remind developed countries to adhere to their commitments and increase official development assistance (ODA) to developing countries as they promised in Rio,” says Richard Muyungi, an environment officer in the Directorate of Environment.

Muyungi adds that new issues likely to feature at the summit are HIV/AIDS, terrorism, globalization, energy, biotechnology and tourism. For Tanzania, refugees are also a priority. Tanzania is home to refugees from Rwanda, Democratic Republic of Congo and Burundi. “This is a big burden for a poor country like Tanzania.” He says that Tanzania will also be looking for a clear plan of action to implement Agenda 21. “We need a special chapter which addresses African needs as it is the only continent severely affected by HIV/AIDS.”

Equity and fairness in world trade is another issue that many feel needs to be addressed at Johannesburg.

The government strongly feels that rich countries should shoulder the bulk of responsibility for environmental protection. “I think developed countries should be taxed for destroying the ecology in poor countries,” says Emmanuel Bavu of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education.

**PARTICIPANTS AT THE SUMMIT**
The lack of coordination on the part of government means that the composition of Tanzania’s Johannesburg delegation remains unclear at the time of writing (late July 2002). The delegation is understood to include members from the environment division of the Vice President’s Office, the National Environment Management Council, as well as the Ministries of Natural Resources and Tourism.

Tanzania had no official head of delegation at the last Johannesburg preparatory conference in Bali and there is concern that members of Tanzania’s Johannesburg delegation will meet for the first time at the departure gates at Dar es Salaam airport en route to South Africa.
People quoted in this report:

Emmanuel Bavu of the Ministry of Science, Technology and Higher Education
Seithy Chachage, a professor of sociology at the University of Dar es Salaam
George Kajembe, a professor at the Sokoine University of Agriculture, Morogoro
Asumile Kajuni, a senior official from the Tanzania office of the US Agency for International Development (USAID)
Rose Kalemera of the NGO SwissAid
Sydney Kwiyamba, journalist
Loyce Lema of the NGO Envirocare
Melchisedeck Sangali Lutema, a lawyer working with the NGO Lawyers Environmental Action Team (LEAT)
Robert Makaramba, former senior lecturer in law at the University of Dar es Salaam
James Mpinga, journalist
Erick Mugurusi, Director of Environment in the Vice President’s Office
Richard Muyungi, an environment officer in the Directorate of Environment
Rev Amon Mwasuka, a small tea-farmer in Mbeya region
Christina Sanyo, Acting Director of the government’s department of Planning and Privatization
Since 1992, Uganda’s government has introduced an array of policies, plans, laws, regulations and institutions for sustainable use of natural resources and for encouraging social and economic development and poverty reduction. These operate from the highest level – the National Constitution – down to local authorities. Implementation of all these initiatives, however, is another story and is constrained by shortage of skilled personnel, management capacity and financial resources – the latter exacerbated by declining terms of trade. NGO critics doubt the government’s real commitment to sustainable development, charging that short-term economic interests are frequently given priority over long-term sustainable development concerns.
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND UGANDA

Many Ugandans equate sustainable development with purely environmental concerns, omitting the social, political, economic and human resources dimensions of the concept. Those who have been involved in the preparatory process for WSSD take the Brundtland Commission’s broader definition: development that meets the needs and aspirations of the present generation without compromising those of future generations. They also emphasize the need for sustainable development to consider the local context, values and cultures and the level of development.

Ugandans also recognize that development can only be sustained through the informed and active participation of the people whose improved welfare is the objective. “It needs to be recognized that people can play a major role as custodians of the earth,” says Suuna Joseph, a trainer and researcher with the Community Development Resource Network. “For example, farmers in Uganda are in charge of over 70 per cent of the land. They need to be educated and involved in the conservation and utilization of resources available to them. These people need to be actively involved in the policymaking process.”

PROGRESS SINCE RIO

There have been two reviews of Uganda’s progress in sustainable development since the Rio Summit of 1992. One was conducted by the government and the other by an umbrella organization of 50 NGOs called Uganda NGO Rio + 10 Coalition.

The government assessment was carried out by a National Preparatory Committee comprising the Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment; the National Environment Management Authority (NEMA); representatives from civil society; the World Conversation Union (IUCN), Joint Energy and Environment Projects (JEEP) and Advocates’ Coalition for Environment and Development (ACODE).

The government review
The government report points out that Uganda’s prospects for future economic development, including its manufacturing sector, still depend on natural resources and agricultural products. It lists an impressive array of policies in several areas, including natural resource protection, and the laws, regulations, institutions and programmes needed to implement these.

Environment and natural resources
A National Environment Policy in 1994 was followed by a Constitution in 1995, which makes sustainable utilization of natural resources a mandatory obligation for all. In the same year, the National Environment Management Authority was set up.

Use of natural resources is overseen by a Ministry of Water, Lands and Environment. A number of policies, regulations and action plans deal with water, wetlands, waste and pollution, ozone-depleting substances, land, forests, agriculture, fisheries, biodiversity, wildlife, and disaster management.

Major groups
Civil society participation in sustainable development has increased over the past 10 years, thanks in part to government efforts to create an enabling environment. NGO registration has been institutionalized in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Gender equality is the focus of a Gender Policy (1997), a Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Welfare, and an affirmative action programme. A National Council for Children and Youth, established in 1993, supports a Youth Policy and an Adolescent Health Policy.

Business and investment are encouraged by the existence of the Uganda Investment Authority, the National Bureau of Standards, and the Uganda Manufacturers’ Association. Meanwhile Environment Impact Assessment Regulations, the Trade Unions Decree, the Occupational Health and Safety Act, and an Employment Bill (still under discussion) should steer them towards social and environmental sustainability. However, the review admits that businesses do not always comply with standards, partly because they lack research, skills and financial capacities.

Social development
Social development goals have been included in general legislation such as the Constitution and the Local Government Act of 1997; and progress will be measured by a National Bureau of Statistics. Health is addressed by the National Water and Sewerage Corporation Act (1995), the National Health Policy of 1999, the Health Sector Strategic Plan, an Aids Control Programme and the Uganda AIDS Commission.

There is a National Population Policy and a population secretariat, a National Plan for Food Security, and a Nutrition and Early Childhood Project. Education is a priority, with programmes for Universal Primary Education, Basic Education for Urban Poverty areas, and an Education Sector Investment Plan.

Besides Vision 2025, another important recent development is the Poverty Eradication Action Plan, which became Tanzania’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, a document that international finance institutions have asked countries to draw up if they want access to debt-relief funds. Its four pillars are rapid and sustainable economic growth; good governance and security; increased ability of the poor to raise their incomes; and enhanced quality of life for the poor.

Governance
Various policies and laws establish rights, strengthen the powers of local authorities, increase government accountability and fight official corruption. Besides the Constitution, these include the Local Government Act of 1997, the Decentralisation policy, the National Programme for Good Governance, the creation of district and local environment committees, the Inspectorate of Government Offices, and the Directorate of Ethics and Integrity – to fight mismanagement and corruption. The Amnesty Act and Amnesty Commission address internal and regional conflicts.

Plans are underway for establishing a central planning body – the National Planning Authority. This will integrate the different plans by districts into those made by ministries and other development bodies. Government believes that this authority will go a long way in harmonizing all activities geared towards sustainable development and also draw up and implement the country’s sustainable development agenda. A census to be carried out in September 2002 will provide data that will be used in the national planning process.
Trade and investment
Uganda’s economic recovery programme encouraged growth and included clear trade policy objectives, including an effort to diversify exports away from the high dependence on coffee. Market monopolies have been removed and domestic tax policy modified. Liberalization brought an increase in private sector, including foreign, investment.

Uganda is party to several trade treaties and agreements: the World Trade Organization; ACP/EU Co-operation; the African Growth and Opportunity Act; the East African Community (EAC) Treaty; and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA).

Funding for development
The strategy for economic growth enshrined in Tanzania’s poverty reduction strategies is supported by tight management of budgets and expenditure. Transparency and accountability are promoted by a Public Finance Act and Local Government Financial and Accounting Regulations, and by a number of institutions: Inspector General of Government, Auditor General, Ministry of Ethics and Integrity. A national debt strategy aims to reduce external debt to sustainable levels and debt is also covered in the Constitution.

NGO critique of progress since Rio
The achievements recorded indicate the government’s commitment to fulfil the strategies adopted in Agenda 21. Implementation of these many laws, policies and plans, however, still has a long way to go – something which the government acknowledges. Implementation is limited by lack of funds, inadequate skilled personnel, and weak planning, management and enforcement systems. A poor communications infrastructure impedes effective accountability, while poor infrastructure in general discourages investment. Declining terms of trade reduce the government’s revenue, leaving it reliant on donor funding for 53 per cent of its budget.

NGOs, however, believe that the problem is not simply a lack of implementation capacity: “Government’s approach promotes economic development more than the social and environmental considerations,” says Irene Makumbi, a Senior Researcher with the Uganda Wildlife Society (UWS). “Unless they can balance the two, government has failed to implement issues of Agenda 21.”

NGOs also point to the fact that President Museveni has often approved a development project when the mandatory Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) has ruled otherwise. In other cases, EIAs have been weak. For example, the government attempted to develop five natural forest reserves on Bugala Island in Lake Victoria in 2000. This was approved following what most observers regarded as a weak EIA. Only after environmental groups publicly protested against the forests being destroyed did the government accept a review of the project.

More recently, the government gave away a 5km forest – Butamira Forest – to a sugar factory owner to use for growing sugarcane. When environmental groups protested that Butamira was a forest reserve and could only be “degazetted” by Parliament, the government claimed that changing the land use did not amount to degazetting the forest.

Another concern of NGOs is that there are no concrete indicators for evaluating the success of policies and strategies. Poverty indicators are in place, but these do not
properly address the other pillars of sustainable development – socio-economic development and ecosystem integrity.

This suggests that the concept of sustainable livelihoods is not properly understood in Uganda – although, as NEMA’s Senior Legal Counsel, Robert Wabunoha points out, there are no standardized mechanisms for measuring sustainable development the world over.

AGENDAS AND EXPECTATIONS FOR THE SUMMIT

The government has varied – but high – expectations of the summit. “Rich countries need to show real commitment to changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and inequitable trading regimes, and move towards far greater efficiency in resource use,” says Kezimbira Miyingo, Minister of State for Environment.

Similarly, at the African Ministerial Conference on Environment meeting, held in Kampala early July 2002, the Minister of Water, Lands and Environment, Ruhakana Rugunda, suggested that Uganda will support efforts to get richer countries to spend more on mitigating the negative effects of climate change.

But while the government wants to see rich countries commit to more equitable sharing of environmental costs and responsibilities, at the same time President Museveni is clear in that he sees liberalization of world trade as fundamental to development.

For some NGOs the summit is an opportunity to move towards consensus on integrating sustainability into development. “We hope to get renewed commitment to sustainable development both from the South and the North. Very little has been achieved in the last 10 years and we hope the situation will be different after the WSSD,” says Richard Kimbowa, Co-ordinator of the Uganda NGO Rio+10 Coalition.

Others hope for action on the links between globalization and poverty: “I hope the summit can address poverty issues in more practical terms; for instance, our people lack access to drinking water and power, which is a major problem,” says an official from the Joint Energy and Environment Projects (JEEP).

Some farmers see the summit as an opportunity to dialogue with multinational organizations on access to global markets, use of harmful pesticides and fertilizers and inclusion in the international research agenda. “We expect the summit to address the negative effects of globalization because it has had adverse effects on our livelihoods as farmers,” says Esta Kiwazi, a farmer from Mukono district in Central Uganda.

The government agenda
Uganda’s President Museveni will lead the country’s 20-strong delegation to the WSSD. The delegation will include three representatives from civil society as well as officials from the Ministries of Water, Lands and Environment; Finance, Planning & Economic Development; Agriculture; Energy; and Foreign Affairs.

At the time of writing, the government was still in the process of formulating an agenda. Some officials said there is likely to be a declaration, presented by the President, revolving around the issues of poverty alleviation, health and human rights among others. According to S. K. Mubaala, Director of Environment in the Ministry of
Water, Lands and Environment, Uganda will support the agenda drawn up by the G77 group of developing countries and China.

Other officials, members of the National Preparatory Committee of WSSD, say that Uganda’s National Report for the summit will form the official presentation. Recommendations made in the report include:

1. Increase public participation in decision-making
2. Emphasize regional integration
3. Enhance the participation of special groups
4. Strive to balance the need for environmental integrity with sustainable development aspirations
5. Increase opportunities for the application of science and technology
6. Address causes and effects of poverty
7. Increase levels of awareness on issues of sustainable development
8. Integrate environmental concerns in macroeconomics
9. Address issues and effects of globalization

Civil society agenda
With the summit just weeks away, some NGOs have expressed dissatisfaction with the government’s failure to come up with a specific agenda. “We are disappointed that our country does not have a concrete position paper. In a recent consultative meeting we held with the European Union to review our progress, the Uganda government was still saying, give us more time,” says Richard Kimbowa of the Uganda NGO Rio+10 Coalition.

The coalition has listed specific areas, which it believes should figure in the country’s agenda for the summit.

Good governance and participation for sustainable development
- Work towards a binding international agreement on corporate accountability, and respect by transnational corporations for human rights, international labour standards and multilateral agreements
- Clear distinction between government and private sector responsibilities, and reaffirmation of the role and responsibility of governments to fulfil their sustainable development obligations by implementing the commitments under the UN Summit Action Plans and the Multilateral Environment Agreements
- A rights approach to citizens’ participation in decision-making
- Public debate and consultations with civil society before endorsement of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD)
- Initiation of an analysis on the effects of military production and consumption on sustainable development, with a view to reallocating resources for combating poverty and environmental harm
- Underline that war and armed conflict cause death and human suffering and are a serious impediment to sustainable development
- Promote increased awareness of the dangers of child labour, and friendly international labour regimes
- Clear targets including timeframes, roles and responsibilities

Food security and market access
- Support informed public participation in decision-making about genetically engineered foods and agro-inputs, and mandatory labelling of genetically modified products
Refuse conditions attached to IMF/World Bank programme that force poor countries to open their markets regardless of the impact on the poor

**Access to information**
- Promote the right to information and develop resources for access to information

**Energy for Uganda**
- An International fund for energy conservation projects and sustainable sources of energy, and support for sustainable energy by international financial institutions and national export credit arrangements
- Rich nations must increase their energy efficiency, and increase their use of renewable energy to 20 per cent by 2010
- Eliminate subsidies that encourage unsustainable consumption and production patterns in all economic sectors
- All nations should sign and ratify internationally binding conventions not later than 2005

People quoted in this report:
Suuna Joseph, a trainer and researcher with the Community Development Resource Network
Richard Kimbowa, Co-ordinator of the Uganda NGO Rio+10 Coalition
Esta Kiwazi, a farmer from Mukono district in Central Uganda
Irene Makumbi, a Senior Researcher with the Uganda Wildlife Society
Kezimbira Miyingo, Minister of State for Environment
Ruhakana Rugunda, Minister of Water, Lands and Environment, Joint Energy and Environment Projects
ROADS TO THE SUMMIT **UNITED STATES**

Of all the countries assessed in this series of reports, the US government is perhaps the most ambivalent when it comes to sustainable development. The phrase is little used in US public policy and is even less understood by members of the public. This goes some way to explaining why the US has no federal sustainable development strategy, and little progress on major international environmental agreements has been made.

Having said that, some progress has been made since the Rio Summit of 1992 at the level of state and local governments. Initiatives such as green buildings, energy efficiency, and carbon dioxide emissions targets have been launched. And at the federal level, the administration no longer doubts the reliability of the science of global climate change – an attitude that characterized its approach to the build-up to the Kyoto Protocol in 1997.

Understandably, the events of 11 September 2001 now dominate most aspects of US foreign policy. While this may mean that sustainable development is even less of a priority than before, the US administration appears keener than in the past to provide development assistance to poor nations.

Like many developed countries, the US administration will go to Johannesburg focusing on achievable areas for improving life in developing countries – but is not in favour of setting binding targets. The administration believes the underlying principles for sustainable development are good governance, public/private partnerships, and economic growth through trade liberalization. The US NGO community agrees with the first of these but disputes the second and third.
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND THE UNITED STATES

“Here in the US, in the years immediately following Rio, it was almost as if the Earth Summit hadn’t happened.” – John Dernbach, Professor of Law, Widener University Law School

It is fair to say that sustainable development is not widely known in the United States. According to Adam Greene, Director for Environmental and Corporate Responsibility at the US Council for International Business, “nobody uses this [phrase] in the United States.” Greene’s view is echoed by John Topping of the Climate Institute, an environmental NGO in Washington DC. “The term has almost become a cliché. It is jargon. Men and women in the street don’t know what it means.”

The US government, however, takes a different line and echoes the internationally agreed view that sustainable development has three supporting pillars: environmental protection, economic development and social development.

It is a similar story from the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the body charged with implementing US environmental policy. “Sustainable development focuses on economic development that goes hand in hand with ecological integrity and social equity,” says Kyle Zieba, an environmental scientist in EPA.

Sustainable development is usually referred to more as an issue for the outside world than for the United States itself.

PROGRESS SINCE RIO

At home
US progress towards sustainable development since the Rio Summit is very mixed. On the one hand the US has no federal sustainable development strategy, no agreed indicators, and little progress on major international environmental agreements, particularly the Kyoto Protocol, which was almost immediately rejected by the incoming Republican administration of President George W. Bush. The UN biodiversity convention, which was similarly rejected by President George Bush senior a decade ago, has never been presented to Congress for ratification since. And the US’s much-criticized patterns of consumption show no signs of slowing down.

Having said that, as in other Northern countries, sustainable development policies can be seen at the level of state and local governments. Initiatives such as green buildings, energy efficiency, and carbon dioxide emissions targets have been launched. And even at the federal level, the administration no longer doubts the reliability of the science of global climate change – an attitude that characterized its approach to the build-up to the Kyoto Protocol in 1997.

Despite federal indifference, US local authorities have made considerable progress – even taken a few electoral risks – in the quest for sustainability, overturning the widely believed view that environmental policies are a vote-loser. “Most of the cutting edge activities are done at the state or local level,” says Kevin James of the Alliance to Save Energy. John Topping of the Climate Institute agrees: “Sustainable development is happening at the state and local level in the US – there are a tremendous amount of activities.”
Innovative state administrations include California, which is expected to become the first state to set emissions limits for motor vehicles. New Hampshire was the first state to adopt a state air-quality plan. New Jersey, Oregon, Massachusetts, Minnesota and Pennsylvania are all in the vanguard of developing sustainable development indicators, integrated decision-making and combating climate change.

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**Box**

**ADVISING THE PRESIDENT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

That sustainable development has failed to make an impact at the federal level is not entirely surprising. What is more difficult to understand is that this happened at a time when sustainability had its own hotline to the White House.

In 1993, following the Rio Summit, President Bill Clinton created a presidential advisory council on sustainable development, which brought together people from government, business, labour, civil rights, and environmental organizations. The group was supposed to develop “bold, new approaches to achieve our economic, environmental, and equity goals”. But it was wound up in 1999 – before the election of George W. Bush – having achieved little of substance.

Some of the council’s observers believe that the body failed because there was no real link between the council’s high-profile members and the innovative approaches to sustainable development being adopted at the level of states. “There was no real connection between what is seen as a higher level debate and the local situation,” says Adam Greene of the US Council for International Business.

Others reckon that the council failed to generate change because it lacked executive authority; that it had no formal place in the Washington policymaking machine. “The Council on Sustainable Development was only an advisory group – the government was free to ignore its recommendation,” says Donald Brown, formerly of the US Environmental Protection Agency.

Green says that the council did make limited progress in the field of what is known as “shared product responsibility”. It looked at the life cycle of consumer products and helped to ensure that the responsibility of recycling, reuse or disposal would be shared among all stakeholders – producers and consumers. One of the reasons for relative success in this area was that it was a very practical area where business, administration and NGOs could really work together.

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US NGOs have mixed feelings about their country’s achievements of the past decade. One such NGO is the World Resources Institute based in Washington DC. “There is a general consensus that the US has done a decent job, not a great job but a decent job; but it got bad press because of the Kyoto Protocol,” says the institute’s John Coyle.

For example, Coyle says that environmental requirements have now been placed on US export credit agencies that provide government-backed loans, guarantees and insurance to US corporations conducting business in developing countries and emerging markets. In other words, credit may be withheld for projects that are considered environmentally damaging.

Similarly, Kevin Finney of the Coalition for Clean Air regards the green building movement as real progress towards sustainable development. The movement began as a response to the energy crisis of 1973 by promoting the virtues of using sustainable, local hand-made products. Today, it is a country-wide initiative that harnesses good design and construction to minimize energy and water use. It is gaining popularity in the public sector.
There are, however, arguably more critics than cheerleaders of US efforts at sustainability. The critics include John Dernbach, Professor of Law at Widener University, and editor of the forthcoming book, *Stumbling Towards Sustainability*. “The administration says sustainable development begins at home but I still haven’t seen what is done at home,” he laments.

Dernbach believes that while some progress have been achieved in particular areas such as fishing on the high seas or hazardous waste, on balance “not very much has been achieved and we are further away from sustainable development now than before.” This, he adds, is largely because of what he calls “a substantial increase” in consumption. “For example there is a much higher rate of municipal recycling but more waste is been disposed per capita every year.”

Another critic is Donald Brown, a former official with the US Environmental Protection Agency, the government agency charged with implementing environmental policies. “The Bush administration has yet to take Agenda 21 seriously,” he says. There is little public awareness and a lack of proper media coverage. For him sustainable development is about integrating economic, social and environmental issues. “Integration has never taken place, there is no strategic thinking in the administration about it,” Brown adds.

**International agreements**

It is widely known that the US has made little progress on major international environmental agreements, particularly the Kyoto Protocol, which was almost immediately rejected by the incoming Republican administration of President George W. Bush, as well as the UN biodiversity convention, which was similarly rejected by President George Bush senior a decade ago.

The US is a signatory to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, but withdrew from the Kyoto Protocol in 2001, when President George Bush signalled his determination to rely more on voluntary, efficiency-driven measures to control emissions. The President proposed to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 18 per cent over the next 10 years in a long-delayed alternative plan to Kyoto announced in February 2002. The proposal did not go down well with environmentalists and many governments around the world.

According to Kevin James of the Alliance to Save Energy, it is not difficult to see why. In its proposals for air pollution, for example, President Bush wants to cut power plant emissions of the three worst air pollutants – nitrogen oxides, sulphur dioxide and mercury – by 70 per cent. But it proposes a market and voluntary approach to deal with the problem, and power plants built before the proposed new act would not be required to abide by the legislation.

The failure of US administrations to sign or ratify international agreements should not, however, be mistaken for a lack of US involvement in these treaties. US administrations usually send very large delegations to all meetings and conferences of international agreements – even those the US is not a party to. Here, they spend a lot of time lobbying other country delegates, as well as interacting with the media and NGOs. A core of officials, meanwhile, will be intimately involved in the negotiation process, trying to persuade other countries to better understand the US point of view.
AGENDAS FOR THE SUMMIT

Government
Understandably, the events of 11 September 2001 now dominate most aspects of US foreign policy. The fight against terrorism and strengthening internal security – known as “homeland security” – are now at the top of the political agenda.

This has dual implications for sustainable development. On the one hand it means that sustainable development at the national level is even less of a priority than before. But internationally, the US administration appears keener than in the past to provide development assistance to poor nations – perhaps in the hope that international development could be an insurance policy against future international terrorism.

Like many developed countries, the US administration will go to Johannesburg stressing the need for implementation. It hopes to focus on achievable areas for improving life in developing countries – water, health, energy, education – but is not in favour of setting binding targets. The administration believes the underlying principles for sustainable development are good governance, public/private partnerships, and economic growth through trade liberalization. The US NGO community agrees with the first of these but disputes the second and third.

Sustainable development and the Johannesburg preparations are certainly not the subject of a domestic debate. The US media has so far paid very little attention to the preparations for the summit. “Every issue is taking a back seat in comparison with security issues,” says Adam Greene.

In the NGO community, there is a wide consensus that the administration will go to Johannesburg trying to look as if it is doing something. The administration, naturally, disagrees strongly with this view, as Jonathan Margolis, head of the US delegation to the Johannesburg Summit explains:

“We must focus our efforts on implementing the sustainable development blueprint that we have established at Rio. For Johannesburg to be a success, it should produce concrete results visible to people around the world, not merely high-sounding rhetoric.”

On 24 May Paula J. Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs, gave a first glimpse of US priorities for the Johannesburg Summit. This was later underlined in a speech by Secretary of State Colin Powell on 15 July. Fearing that the summit could be no more than a pure statement of intentions and broad declarations, Dobriansky called for concrete results: “It should produce compelling results,” she said. “Since countries have already agreed on Agenda 21, the World Summit must be about actual implementation.”

This was confirmed by Alan Hecht, Director of International Environmental Affairs for the National Security Council and the White House Council on Environmental Quality. He said that the administration’s initiatives will include concrete proposals with assurances of implementation.

During her briefing, Dobriansky stressed the necessity of free markets and democratic institutions in poor countries and the limits of Western official action, especially aid that is not pegged to results on the ground.
She outlined three themes to achieve sustainable development:

Good governance: the idea behind this is that sustainable development needs a solid foundation. Sustainable development “begins at home with effective domestic policies”. Developing countries must have robust institutions and sound policies, and the rule of law must be the norm.

Partnerships: the idea here is to forge partnerships with other governments, businesses and civil society groups to ensure successful on-the-ground implementation.

One official in the Environmental Protection Agency said the US will support a kind of partnership usually referred as “Type 2” – voluntary initiatives of interested parties who agree to work together on issues of sustainable development. The administration strongly believes that sustainable development will come about through voluntary partnerships rather than legally binding international targets. “We have already a number of international targets we don’t meet,” said Evan Bloom, an attorney with the State Department Attorney.

Free markets: Dobriansky said that “productivity-driven growth” is a prerequisite for sustainable development. She opposed “pouring money into a failed status quo,” saying, “Assistance cannot only flow in one direction, and there can’t be at the other end an absence of commitment.” This is widely understood to mean that the administration is not taking the Johannesburg process as a mean of advancing sustainable development internally. It is focusing more on what needs to be achieved outside the country rather than in the US.

Six specific goals for the summit
Dobriansky outlined six specific goals for the summit:

- Reducing the number of people without safe drinking water and seeking better water management
- Providing access to clean energy
- Stemming HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria
- Ensuring universal basic education without sex discrimination
- Cutting hunger and improving agricultural productivity
- Conserving forest and oceans

These include the five areas where UN Secretary General Kofi Annan has called for concrete action from Johannesburg – water, energy, health, agricultural productivity, and biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management. Controversially, there is no mention of climate change, which the US does not want to see discussed at Johannesburg.

According to one US administration insider, the government has clearly given priorities to areas where it thinks it can achieve a consensus. This was effectively confirmed during Dobriansky’s briefing, which made little mention of environmental protection. “This is a summit about sustainable development,” she said. “Climate change is one component of that.”

Civil society
The Citizen’s Network for sustainable development – or CitNet – is a non-profit, relatively loose network bringing together US-based organizations, communities and
individuals working in sustainable development. It has hosted many meetings with the US administration and is now preparing a report, “American promise”, a kind of alternative to the official assessment of US sustainable development, which the US administration is supposed to prepare for the Johannesburg Summit.

CitNet has already listed issues that it considers to be barriers to sustainability

- Lack of public awareness of sustainable development choices
- Lack of news media coverage of sustainability issues
- Mass advertising and marketing of consumerism
- Overemphasis by policymakers on economics vs. sustainability
- Political influence of industry lobbyists
- Political influence of anti-environmental groups
- Fragmentation of civil society, failure to organize effectively

It also recommends:

- Establishing a National Office of Sustainable Development
- Redefining trade policy to reflect social and environmental priorities
- Developing energy policies guided by sustainability
- Integrating sustainable production and consumption priorities into economic policy
- Adopting the Earth Charter

Most US-based environmental NGOs and business groups agree with the administration that good governance is important for sustainable development. They agree that anti-corruption measures, independent courts, and the basic rule of law are key. Environmental NGOs also add the importance of transparency and access to information. But that is the point at which they part company with the government. The idea that sustainable development will come about as a result of free markets and voluntary partnerships – as opposed to legislation – is strongly opposed. And environmental NGOs complain that this point of view will not be properly represented by the US Johannesburg delegation. Donald Brown explains that one of the reasons why the US government doesn’t pay much attention to the NGOs is that it believes they don’t have a big constituency.

PARTICIPATION IN THE SUMMIT

It remains unclear whether President George W. Bush will travel to Johannesburg – an issue that is the subject of fevered speculation in Washington DC. Colin Powell has, however, promised to attend and will lead the US delegation in the absence of the President.

Under Secretary Paula Dobriansky will also attend. The State Department Delegation will be headed by Jonathan Margolis, Director of the Office of Policy Coordination and Initiatives in the Bureau of Oceans, International Environmental and Scientific Affairs. The office is also leading US efforts for the Johannesburg Summit. Other departments and agencies expected to send representatives include agriculture, energy, the Council on Environmental Quality, and the US Agency for International Development.

The US has failed to prepare an assessment of progress towards sustainable development, as required by the UN. Instead, it will bring to Johannesburg a country
profile, which will report on various initiatives, but not review progress in line with Agenda 21.

**People quoted in this report:**

Evan Bloom, State Department Attorney
Donald Brown, former EPA official, published a book dealing with US performance on climate change policy
John Coyle, World Resources Institute
John Dernbach, law professor at Widener University
Paula J. Dobriansky, Under Secretary of State for Global Affairs
Kevin Finney, Coalition for Clean Air
Adam Greene, Director for Environmental and Corporate Responsibility at the US Council for International Business
Alan Hecht, Director of International Environmental Affairs for the National Security Council and White House Council on Environmental Quality
Kevin James, Alliance to Save Energy
Jonathan Margolis, head of the US delegation to the Johannesburg Summit
John Topping, the Climate Institute
Kyle Zieba, an environmental scientist in the Environment Protection Agency
The Doha Development Agenda of the World Trade Organization

The Doha Development Agenda is an agreement to begin a new set of negotiations to further liberalize international trade. It was reached on 14 November 2001 by trade ministers from the 144 states of the World Trade Organization, at the end of the 4th Ministerial Meeting of the WTO in Doha, Qatar. Previously referred to as the “Millennium Round” or “Development Round” of negotiations, the new round is due to be completed by 1 January 2005. Progress will be reviewed at a 5th Ministerial Meeting, planned for Cancun, Mexico, from 10 to 14 September 2003.

The Doha Round was hailed by then WTO Director-General Mike Moore as “a far-reaching set of negotiations, which have placed development issues and the interests of our poorer members at the heart of our work”. This is a challenge to the developed countries, which must reduce the support they give their own industries, especially agriculture – a step fraught with political difficulty, especially for the EU and the US.

Currently, rich countries subsidise their agriculture by nearly $1 billion per day. Sixty-five days of this subsidy would pay for the estimated cost of achieving the UN’s seven Millennium Goals of poverty reduction and development. It is also a challenge to developing countries. According to the WTO, 70 per cent of the burden of trade barriers on developing countries comes from trade with other developing countries, which grew faster than total world trade in the 1990s.

Many NGOs and some in developing country governments opposed the new round and are doubtful that poor countries and poor people within all countries will benefit. They see little evidence that rich countries will open their markets; some question the evidence that liberalization leads to growth; many believe that the proposed new liberalization measures will reduce governments’ ability to protect livelihoods and provide services, and that these costs will more than offset any macroeconomic gains.

The principal commitments of the Doha Agenda are:

**Agriculture**

To open markets and reduce with a view to phasing out export subsidies and trade-distorting domestic farm support, while taking into account non-trade development concerns. Special and differential treatment will enable developing countries to take account of their development needs, including food security and rural development.

**Services**

(Services include telecommunications, financial services, transport and business services.) Work will continue to liberalize the entry of foreign service providers into as many domestic service sectors as governments choose. In response to the fears expressed by many about this controversial area, the declaration states “we reaffirm the right of Members … to regulate, and to introduce new regulations on, the supply of services.”
Non-agricultural products
To reduce or eliminate tariff peaks and escalation (higher tariffs on goods that are processed as opposed to raw materials) and non-tariff barriers, in particular on products exported by developing countries.

Trade and investment; competition policy; government procurement
Work will continue towards establishing multilateral framework rules for foreign direct investment and for competition policy. If members agree by consensus, full negotiations will begin after the next ministerial meeting in 2003. Negotiations on government procurement may also be agreed, but will be limited to transparency questions – they will not restrict the scope for governments to give preference to domestic suppliers.

Trade and environment
There was no explicit declaration on the relationship between the WTO and multilateral environment agreements (such as for example the Climate Change Convention), and negotiations will continue. The WTO’s Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE) is directed to “give particular attention to the effect of environmental measures on market access” and to labelling requirements for environmental purposes – that is, to ensure that rich countries do not use environmental standards as a means of preventing developing country goods from entering their markets. The CTE will make recommendations to the 5th Ministerial Meeting.

TRIPS
A separate Ministerial Declaration (sometimes referred to as the Doha Declaration) states that TRIPS (the agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights) does not and should not prevent members from taking measures to protect public health and should be interpreted to allow members to promote access to medicines for all.

The TRIPS Council is instructed to examine the relationship between the TRIPS agreement and the Convention on Biological Diversity, the protection of traditional knowledge and other relevant developments.

Least developed countries
To address the marginalization of these countries in international trade and to improve their effective participation in the trade system

Protests
Protests against the WTO and its operations at the 3rd Ministerial Meeting in Seattle in 1999 focused on the organization’s perceived lack of transparency, and the inability of poor nations to participate in the negotiations as equals with the world’s economic heavyweights. In response, the WTO confirmed its members’ “collective responsibility to ensure the effective participation of all Members,” and said that it is “committed to making the WTO’s operations more transparent, including through effective and prompt dissemination of information, and to improve dialogue with the public”. Negotiations to improve and clarify the Dispute Settlement Understanding were also agreed.

Particular efforts are going into capacity-building for poor countries – for example, training for trade negotiators and short courses in trade policy, in partnership with developing country universities, which begin in Nairobi, Morocco and Addis Ababa in July 2002.
NEPAD: The New Partnership for Africa’s Development

NEPAD is an Africa-wide development initiative backed by five of the continent’s most powerful leaders.

The plan has the backing of Presidents Bouteflika, Obasanjo and Mbeki of Algeria, Nigeria and South Africa respectively, and President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal. It is an amalgamation of two separate initiatives. NEPAD was approved at an OAU summit in July 2001.

NEPAD’s specific goals are:

- To achieve and sustain an average annual GDP growth rate of seven per cent for the next 15 years
- To ensure that the continent achieves the Millennium Development Goals – especially halving the number of people living in poverty by 2015
- African governments commit themselves to good governance: strengthening democracy and the rule of law, peace and security, economic and corporate governance and reduced corruption
- The international community commits itself to providing access to global markets for African goods, debt relief and increased aid

The commitment to good governance is what distinguishes NEPAD from previous (failed) initiatives. It is underpinned by the African Peer Review mechanism, a system of mutual support between participating countries, aimed at promoting good practices and moving Africa away from donor-imposed aid conditionality.

Implementation of the NEPAD programme will require $64 billion annually, so the support of the international community is essential. NEPAD’s champions among rich countries include Britain’s Prime Minister Tony Blair. Gaining additional support has been a priority in the first six months for NEPAD’s South Africa-based secretariat.

Many details on its structures and implementation, however, remain to be worked out. This is one of many criticisms being levelled at NEPAD’s door by civil society organizations in Africa and abroad. They claim that NEPAD will make little difference to the lives of ordinary Africans. They have also criticized NEPAD’s founders for not discussing the initiative with publics in their respective countries.

Another criticism is that NEPAD is premised on achieving economic growth through participation in global markets – a goal which many feel is not realistic for the poorest African countries. Critics also point to the negligible involvement of women and the lack of clear plans for achieving the goal of promoting women. Finally, many doubt whether the international community will be able to fulfil its side of the bargain by delivering on debt relief, aid and genuinely open markets.
## UN Millennium Development Goals

By 2015:

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<th>Goal</th>
<th>Target</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger</td>
<td>Reduce by half the proportion of people living on less than a dollar a day</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>Achieve universal primary education</td>
<td>Ensure that all boys and girls complete a full course of primary schooling</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Promote gender equality and empower women</td>
<td>Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education preferably by 2005, and at all levels by 2015</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Reduce child mortality</td>
<td>Reduce by two-thirds the mortality rates for infants and children under five</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Improve maternal health</td>
<td>Reduce by three-quarters the maternal mortality ratio</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases</td>
<td>Halt and begin to reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Ensure environmental sustainability</td>
<td>Integrate the principles of sustainable development into country policies and programmes, reverse the loss of environmental resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Develop a global partnership for development</td>
<td>Open trading system, special needs of Least Developed Countries, debt, employment, access to medicines and information and communications technologies</td>
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Annex 4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS and AUTHOR NOTES

India was written by Pallava Bagla, India correspondent for Science magazine; photojournalist with Corbis Sygma and a LEAD Fellow; and Subhadra Menon, Editor of the fortnightly e-magazine Terra Green and formerly health and environment reporter for India Today.

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South Africa was written by Linda Ambler, a researcher with the Southern African environmental justice NGO, GroundWork.

Tanzania was written by Francis Nyange and Balinagwe Mwambungu, Executive Director and Chairman of the Journalists' Environmental Association of Tanzania.

Uganda was written by Elizabeth Birabwa, Chair of the Environmental Journalists Association of Uganda; Lillian Nsubuga, a writer on the weekly EastAfrican; and Sylvia Nakabugu Biraahwa, Treasurer of the Environmental Journalists Association of Uganda.

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Leadership for Environment and Development (LEAD) is a global network of 1200 professionals and 14 NGOs committed to sustainable development. LEAD’s mission is to create, strengthen and support networks of people and institutions promoting change towards sustainable development. More from [www.lead.org](http://www.lead.org).

Panos London’s mission is to work with media and other information actors to enable developing countries to shape and communicate their own development agendas through informed public debate. Panos particularly focuses on amplifying the voices of the poor and marginalized. More from [www.panos.org.uk](http://www.panos.org.uk).

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