



# World Summit on Sustainable Development

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Agenda item 8  
Partnership events

## Summaries of the Partnership events

Note by the Secretariat



Addendum

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## **PARTNERSHIP PLENARY ON REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION**

Thursday, 30 August 2002 pm

The plenary on regional implementation convened with brief presentations given by the Executive Secretaries of each UN Regional Commission, addressing themes of: poverty eradication and sustainable development; financing for sustainable development; natural resources and sustainable development; integrating environment and sustainable development into decision-making; and trade, investment and globalization in the context of sustainable development.

A panel comprised of representatives from the International Centre for Environment and Development (ICED), Amazonian Environment Funds, UNDP, the Council of Europe and the International Centre for Agricultural Research in Dry Areas (ICARDA) then made statements. This was followed by an interactive dialogue among representatives of Governments and resource persons from the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN); the African Development Bank; the Women, Environment and Development Organization (WEDO); UNEP; the Asian Development Bank; the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP); the Palestinian Environment Authority; the Abu Dhabi Environmental Data Initiative; and Ministers of Belgium, Georgia and Croatia representing their respective sub-regions. Mr. Gustave Speth, Professor of Yale University and former UNDP Administrator, moderated the session.

### **SUMMARY**

Regional implementation has become increasingly important since the Rio Summit. Many economic, social and environmental issues, including trade and finance, natural disaster mitigation, integrated river basin management, and waste management, are of a transboundary nature and cannot be dealt with at the national level alone. Actions taken at the regional or sub-regional levels provide a bridge between national realities and global priorities while also addressing common areas of concern and shared interests associated with geographic proximity, relative homogeneity and shared history. Regional groups give smaller countries a collective voice and, through regional networks, put them on a more equal footing within the global order.

UN Regional Commissions and other regional institutions have strategic advantages in performing a number of functions, including:

- Promoting regional partnerships and regional cooperation through interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral partnerships;
- Providing fora for inter-sectoral and multistakeholder dialogues at the regional level, particularly in preparation for global negotiations and conventions;
- Acting as think-tanks and undertaking analyses of transboundary problems related to environment and sustainable development;
- Supporting capacity building efforts and information exchange at the regional level;
- Monitoring and assessing progress made, including the follow up of WSSD outcomes.

Despite these potential roles for regional institutions, it is important to remember that regional institutions' effectiveness is dependent on the continuous support provided by their respective member states.

A number of issues were raised in relation to the five themes introduced by the Regional Commissions:

- While further promoting the need for a regional approach, a clear framework must also be established to ensure that benefits from such an approach reach the people at large. The empowerment of women, indigenous people and other vulnerable groups to take part in policy dialogues and in decision-making is essential in this regard. For example, a newly created women's action agenda in line with the Millennium Development Goals will empower women from each region to monitor actions for implementation.
- Natural resource management and its equitable use pose transboundary challenges that can only be addressed at the regional or sub-regional level, through joint and integrated strategies and management of regional ecosystems, river basins and common water systems, regional seas, and movement of hazardous substances.
- Sound decision-making requires more accurate data from local, national and regional levels. The Abu Dhabi Environmental Data Initiative is one example of capacity

building at the regional level for data collection, analysis and dissemination. Building knowledge networks for scientific research and innovation is essential.

- Awareness has increased within the private sector on the importance of sustainable development issues. However, the notion of profits must be addressed for business and industry to become truly committed to undertaking private initiatives towards sustainable development. Markets and profits should be effectively directed to alleviate poverty and attain other Millennium Development Goals through market incentives.

Statements were also made regarding issues specific to each region:

- In Africa, stable and high-quality assistance and partnerships are clearly needed to combat poverty, HIV/AIDS, food insecurity and other priority issues. NEPAD is a dynamic and promising initiative characterized by African ownership, political commitment and financing with 15 countries involved in partnership with the rest of the world. It could serve as a development model for other regions.
- An integrated strategy is needed to address the specific needs of the Pacific islands, which can get lost in the greater Asia region. Sub-regional approaches involving relevant stakeholders should therefore be emphasized, to increase participation by indigenous people. The question of island vulnerability and related risk management, including natural disaster prevention and mitigation, are important issues for the Pacific as well as the Caribbean and other island regions.
- Respect for human rights, rule of law, transparency, equality of opportunities and universal access to social services are particularly important in achieving social cohesion in Europe. Strategies set up to promote ecological partnerships in areas such as waste management, water management, cleaner production, and partnerships for new mechanisms for financing are to be endorsed at the Conference on Environment for Europe to take place in Kiev in 2003.

- The Latin America and the Caribbean Initiative aims to promote sustainable development, adopt effective actions with respect to Summit outcomes, and raise use of renewable energy to 10% by 2010. A comprehensive network of financial institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean region exists to facilitate distribution of resources necessary to meet global commitments. Successful sub-regional sustainable development initiatives have already been undertaken in biodiversity conservation and purchase of carbon credits.
- Regionalization is a relatively new concept in West Asia. The priority concern and prerequisite for sustainable development is the issue of peace, security and conflict resolution. Despite positive efforts, an absence of peace, rising foreign debt, and limited capacity of academic and research centres have hindered regional progress. However, significant steps have been taken in the direction of regional cooperation and coordination in information and data-sharing and water management. Meaningful efforts for future regional cooperation are anticipated in areas addressing capacity-building, water and soil resources for agriculture, marine pollution in the Mediterranean, coral reef protection in Gulf States, comparative studies of regional laws and regulatory schemes, joint information and data systems including satellite mapping, and putting an end to weapons of mass destruction.

The overall follow-up to WSSD at the regional level should focus on, *inter alia*, transboundary issues and externalities, regional advocacy and information sharing, promoting and monitoring regional sustainable development-related strategies, advocacy, awareness-raising and capacity building.