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FROM RIO TO JOHANNESBURG: THE EARTH SUMMIT AND RIO+10

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The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) – the ‘Earth Summit’ – took place in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992.

Unprecedented in size and scope, Rio resulted in a number of important agreements including Agenda 21, two new conventions and the foundation of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. Among these Agenda 21 has a particularly important role in defining sustainable development and providing a blueprint for change. Within the next two years the world will be preparing for the tenth-year review of the Rio Conference, which will lead to the World Summit on Sustainable Development – ‘Rio+10’.

Rio+10 will take place in Johannesburg in mid- or late 2002. It is designed to review the progress made towards the aims set out in Agenda 21 and to accelerate the implementation of commitments. It is supposed to focus on ‘action-oriented decisions in areas where further efforts are needed to implement Agenda 21, address ... new challenges and opportunities, and result in renewed political commitment and support for sustainable development’.¹ Although its precise agenda and major themes are yet to be determined, it has been agreed that Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration should not be renegotiated, and that the review should ‘identify measures for the further implementation of Agenda 21 and the other outcomes of UNCED, including sources of funding’.² Yet there is still a danger that Rio+10 will end up, as one observer put it, as nothing more than a ‘conference to celebrate a conference’. This Briefing Paper outlines the process that will lead to Rio+10, and considers the main issues for discussion, including finance, technology transfer, capacity-building, trade and governance.

The background to Rio+10

The first international environmental conference, the UN Conference on the Human Environment, was held in 1972 in Stockholm, responding to a fast-growing concern over pollution and environmental security in the West. This concern was reflected in the ambitious statements that came out of the conference launching ‘a new liberation movement to free men from the threat of their thralldom to environmental perils of their own making’.³ The most important of its outcomes was the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). This was followed by the influential publication of *Our Common Future* in 1987 by the

World Commission on Environment and Development, which coined the phrase ‘sustainable development’ – defined as ‘actions that meet the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs’.⁴ These developments in the international political agenda, fuelled primarily by Western environmental and peace movements, prepared the backdrop for the Rio ‘Earth Summit’ held in June 1992.

Unique in size, scope, level of participation and process, Rio was attended by over 100 heads of state and government, more than have ever attended an international conference before or since. It also provided a platform for over 1,500 officially accredited NGOs and other stakeholders such as women’s groups, youth, indigenous people, local authorities, trade unions, businesses, industry, the scientific and technological community and farmers.⁵

The Earth Summit was designed to act as a catalyst and focus for injecting the concept of sustainable development into international institutions, national governments and the private sector around the world. Its outcome was agreement on three general documents (the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21 and the Forest Principles), one new institution (the UN Commission on Sustainable Development) and two new environmental conventions (on climate change and on biodiversity); there was also much associated discussion on financing mechanisms.

The *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development* is a short statement of twenty-seven principles for guiding action on environment and development. A recognizable descendant of the Stockholm Principles of 1972 (agreed at the first international environmental conference), it was a carefully negotiated, delicately balanced and – almost inevitably – in some places fairly ambiguous text. It seems unlikely to have had much direct impact on the behaviour of nations, but its adoption, *inter alia*, of the concept of sustainable development, the precautionary principle and the polluter pays principle has helped spread understanding of the means of integrating environment, development, and, to a lesser extent, social objectives and policies.

Agenda 21, on the other hand, is an immense document of forty chapters outlining an ‘action plan’ for sustainable development, covering a wide range of specific natural resources and the role of different groups, as well as issues of social and economic development and implementation. It effectively integrates environment and development concerns and is strongly oriented towards bottom-up, participatory and community-based approaches. As with the Rio Declaration, it seems unlikely that countries have altered behaviour simply as a result of Agenda 21 (particularly as anything especially sensitive, such as the possibility of reducing fossil fuel use, is dealt with in fairly vague language), but it does provide a comprehensive framework for achieving the global

⁴ WCED, *Our Common Future* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987).

⁵ Collectively referred to as ‘major groups’ by the United Nations Sustainable Development Division.

¹ UN General Assembly decision of 20 December 2000 (A/RES/55/199) para 3

² Ibid.

³ UNEP, ‘Brief Summary of the General Debate’, <http://www.unep.org/Documents>.

transition to sustainable development, and for measuring progress towards this goal. It also appears to have assisted, in a number of countries, the creation of new mechanisms for coordinating policy on environmentally sustainable development, and the development of national environmental action plans.

As with Stockholm, one of the main outcomes of Rio was the creation of a new institution, the *Commission on Sustainable Development*. Created specifically to follow up the Earth Summit commitments, the CSD's key functions include reviewing progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the other instruments adopted at UNCED and subsequently, developing policy recommendations and promoting dialogue and building partnerships with governments, the international community and the major groups identified in Agenda 21. The CSD has certainly succeeded in promoting broad-based policy dialogues bringing together governments and civil society (which in turn has helped to legitimize the role of non-governmental bodies in some countries), and reports prepared by governments on their environmental performance have generated useful data. However, the huge breadth of its agenda, its low status in the UN hierarchy, its limited success in involving policy-makers in areas other than environment and development, its tendency to repeat, at a more general level, discussions which have taken place in other, more specialized forums, and its practice (standard, but of questionable value) of negotiating texts, mean that in practice it has been nothing more than a rather diffuse talking shop, with no significant means of seriously advancing Agenda 21.

Of rather more importance for environmental diplomacy were the two new conventions opened for signature at Rio, the *UN Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) and the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD). Neither was formally part of the UNCED preparatory process, but the date of the Earth Summit offered a useful deadline by which the negotiations could be completed – and the political impetus provided by UNCED helped both treaties enter into force with unusual rapidity. Although the original UNFCCC was only a framework convention with no target dates or emission levels, owing primarily to fierce opposition from the US, this process later on gave rise to the 1997 Kyoto Protocol. If and when it enters into force, the Kyoto Protocol will mark the first set of globally coordinated efforts to combat climate change. The CBD is generally regarded as a fairly cautious first step

in addressing a very complex issue, but it has established some important principles and has also led to a more targeted treaty, the 2000 Cartagena Protocol on biosafety (not yet in force).

Discussions at UNCED on forests proved particularly difficult; in the end the concerns of developed and developing countries could not be reconciled, and the outcome was a non-binding set of *Forest Principles*. Discussions on forest issues continued after Rio through the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests, subsequently replaced by the Intergovernmental Forum on Forests. These provided some useful analysis, but no concrete action, and further international arrangements – the UN Forum on Forests and Collaborative Partnership on Forests – have recently been agreed. Rio also marked the start of negotiations on *desertification*, leading ultimately to the 1994 UN Convention to Combat Desertification. The Convention has not proved to be a particularly effective agreement, partly because of a lack of associated financing, but it has at least helped to mobilize developing-country (particularly African) NGOs and local communities.

The most difficult and protracted issue for discussion at Rio was the question of *finance*. The idea of a global environment fund had first been floated at Stockholm in 1972, and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) was created in 1990, initially as a pilot programme. Administered jointly by the World Bank, UNEP and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the GEF's activities were confined to helping tackle specific global environmental problems: ozone depletion, climate change, biodiversity loss and international water pollution. Furthermore, it was designed to finance only the incremental costs of those domestic actions which produce global environmental benefits. Managed by the World Bank, the GEF has proved relatively successful in attracting commitments and has become a natural home for the financing instruments of the UNFCCC and CBD, although some concerns have been expressed over excessive bureaucracy in the disbursement of funding.

Developing countries' insistence that Rio should generate new and additional funding for a wider range of development activities was not successful, and initial proposals to set 2000 as the target date by which the UN target of 0.7% of GNP in aid was to be reached ended up simply as a call to achieve the target 'as soon as possible'. In 1991 the UNCED Secretariat estimated the total cost of financing Agenda 21 as \$625 billion per year – made up of \$125

billion in Northern aid and \$500 billion spending by the South itself. During the negotiations Maurice Strong, the UNCED Secretary-General, indicated that a first commitment of about \$10 billion would help to improve the atmosphere in the climate negotiations, yet the actual funding fell far short of even that.⁶ Consequently, a widespread perception among developing countries that the North has failed to honour its commitments on the provision of aid has contributed to a poisoning of the international political climate.

Although in retrospect Rio has often been regarded as an event of significant importance, at the time many viewed the products of the Earth Summit as something of a disappointment. Marked by a clear North–South divide on priorities and insufficient input from the major stakeholder groups, UNCED did not live up to its promise. At the closing session, Strong referred to 'agreement without sufficient commitment'; and the then UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, remarked that 'one day we will have to do better'.

Despite its lack of concrete achievements, however, the Earth Summit was not without impact. It brought a large number of governments together to discuss – in some cases, for the first time – global issues of environment and development. It generated much wider awareness of the term 'sustainable development' (though the precise meaning of the term is more problematic), helped the concept penetrate the consciousness of government departments and leaders, again sometimes for the first time, and led, in some countries, to new local and national institutional mechanisms for promoting sustainable development. Agenda 21, most notably, provided a carefully worded but nevertheless useful blueprint for sustainable development covering a great variety of very complex issues. Furthermore, Rio provided an important staging post in the development of the global regimes on climate change and biodiversity. Above all, perhaps, it demonstrated in a convincing manner the movement of environmental issues from the fringes of public debate and concern to somewhere at least a little nearer the centre, with a far higher profile among the media and civil society than hitherto.

Rio+5: lessons for the tenth-year review

In June 1997, heads of government and senior representatives from over 130 countries met in New York to consider what

⁶ Staley P. Johnson, *The Earth Summit*, UNCED, 1993.

progress had been made since Rio. This Special Session of the UN General Assembly, inevitably dubbed 'Earth Summit II', or Rio+5, was something of a disappointment, failing to generate much political attention or momentum, or any real new spirit of international cooperation – though it did agree a useful work programme for the CSD. The assessment of progress since Rio recognized some positive developments – particularly at local and community levels – but pointed to growing problems of poverty, inequality and environmental degradation.

Although Rio+5 proved to be disappointing, identifying the main shortcomings of the event might help parties to do better in Rio+10. Rio+5 lacked an overall vision and focus because of an inadequate preparatory process and insufficient engagement of stakeholders and institutions; this was not helped by the lack of integration among various environmental institutions within and outside UN system.⁷

Preparations for Rio +10

The second review of the implementation of Agenda 21 is to be held in 2002. The CSD has been assigned to act as the preparatory committee for the conference, with four additional sessions leading to Rio+10 in summer 2002. The preparations are expected to be carried out at local, national and global levels (see Figure 1 for a detailed calendar). The UN Secretariat is encouraging countries to review local and national achievements with regard to domestic sustainable development policies, and the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) is preparing country profiles on thematic areas of Agenda 21 and the Programme for Further Implementation of Agenda 21. In addition, DESA, in collaboration with other parts of the Secretariat, has prepared a questionnaire to be distributed to all the permanent missions in UN in order to determine a proposed framework for addressing key issues in reviewing the implementation of Agenda 21.

The CSD is holding four meetings between early 2001 and May 2002, acting as the Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) as well as organizing regional round-tables and Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues to contribute to the preparations. The agenda of CSD in 2001 includes discussion of atmosphere, energy, information for decision-making and participation, international cooperation for an enabling environ-

⁷ Johannah Bernstein, *Earth Summit 2002 Workshop: Final Report*, 22 February 2000.

ment and transport, all of which are likely to be reflected in the framework for Rio+10. Furthermore the segment meetings CSD holds with industry, trade unions, NGOs and other stakeholders will feed into the review process.

As well as CSD and DESA, the UN Inter-Agency Committee on Sustainable Development (IACSD) is expected to prepare review reports of achievements and problems faced in the implementation of all Agenda 21 commitments. The factual part will be submitted in the form of the Secretary-General's report to CSD10 in May 2001, and will provide information for the regional preparatory processes. The analytical assessment will form the comprehensive policy report of the Secretary-General, to be submitted to the second session of CSD10 in 2002. All these efforts are expected to feed directly into the Global Preparatory Committee meetings. The final PrepCom, which will be held at ministerial level in May 2002 in Indonesia, is expected to prepare a concise and focused document that should emphasize the need for a global partnership to achieve the objectives of sustainable development, reconfirm the need for an integrated and strategically focused approach to the implementation of Agenda 21, and address the main challenges and opportunities faced by the international community in this regard.⁸

As a result, unlike at Rio+5, the review process should have been fully carried out in advance of the Summit itself, allowing the parties to take focused action.

Rio+10: key issues and concerns

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan's special report to the General Assembly notes that governments suggested issues to be addressed in the 2002 agenda, including poverty and sustainable development, climate change, biodiversity (including biosafety), the protection and sustainable management of water sources, energy, sustainable forest management, access to financial sources and technology, education, distributional equity and environmental security.⁹

While these proposed thematic issues are likely to be important in the discussions, it has also been agreed that Agenda 21 must not be renegotiated at Rio+10.

⁸ UN General Assembly decision of 20 December 2000 (A/RES/55/199), para. 17 (b).

⁹ United Nations General Assembly, Report of the Secretary-General, 'Ensuring effective preparations for the 10-year review of progress achieved in the Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Programme for the Further implementation of Agenda 21' (A/55/120), para. 16.

Consequently, deadlocks in cross-cutting issues such as finance, technology transfer, capacity-building, trade and governance will need to be resolved.

These key issues have frequently led to negotiating stalemates within the CSD and other UN forums. One of the major challenges for Rio+10 will be to move beyond these stalemates by revisiting the underlying needs that these policy areas must address and by identifying new ways of taking action. While such a large agenda, with potentially very complicated issues, may result in an unsatisfactory result, many hope that the conference can also be successfully promoted as a target date for the entry into force of a number of key multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), including the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, the Cartagena Protocol on biosafety, the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent, and the new draft convention on persistent organic pollutants.

(i) Finance

Finance was one of the most controversial and protracted issues in Rio and continues to be so in different UN forums. It is very likely that Rio+10 will need to tackle some of the key concerns over finance, especially with relation to capacity-building, Official Development Assistance (ODA) and management of UN initiatives. Tensions are already visible at the preparation level of the conference; the American delegate told the Second Committee (Economic and Financial) of the UN General Assembly that the United States would be unable to pay its share of United Nations funding for a conference taking place outside the New York headquarters.

Chapter 33 of Agenda 21 stated that '[t]he implementation of the huge sustainable development programmes of Agenda 21 will require the provision to developing countries of substantial new and additional financial resources', and added that such funding needs to be predictable, owing to the long-term nature of sustainable development objectives. Specific activities proposed in the chapter include an increase of funding for the GEF, multilateral funding for capacity-building, strengthening of bilateral programmes, debt relief and policies for mobilizing foreign direct investment for sustainable development. As mentioned earlier, the chapter estimated the average annual costs for implementing Agenda 21 in developing countries to be \$625 billion, and suggested that \$125 billion be provided by the international community in grant or concessional terms. In 1992 this target approximately equalled the

UN target of 0.7% of GNP agreed after the Pearson report in 1970.

However, in 1997, the Rio+5 conference noted with concern that levels of development assistance were falling, at the same time as pointing out that aid had the potential to play an 'important complementary and catalytic role in promoting economic growth and may in some cases play a catalytic role in encouraging private investment'. ODA from the OECD to developing countries has been falling since its high point of \$59.6 billion in 1994 (0.30% of OECD GNP),¹⁰ despite many OECD countries' commitment to the 0.7% target.

Progress on ODA will be crucial for success at Rio+10. This is, however, a highly controversial issue, and new approaches such as micro and mini finance, public-private partnerships, global public goods and incentives for FDI into sustainable development projects need to be considered if the current deadlock is to be overcome.

Apart from the ODA issue, other key items on the Rio+5 finance agenda included funding for the GEF and UN agencies, the role of the private sector, debt relief, the need for domestic action to promote finance for sustainable development, micro credit, environmentally damaging subsidies, economic instruments and innovative financing mechanisms. Since the fifth-year review of the implementation of Agenda 21, finance for sustainable development has also frequently been discussed at CSD meetings; the most recent discussion was of financial resources and mechanisms for freshwater management at CSD6.

The effectiveness of the GEF, the main body within the UN system involved with financing for sustainable development, has been questioned. Critics argue that it is too bureaucratic and that its additionality requirement has hindered private-sector involvement. GEF replenishment is currently a controversial issue. The GEF is also likely to be the major, and possibly only, financing mechanism for recently negotiated MEAs, such as the Kyoto Protocol or the draft convention on the control of persistent organic pollutants.

In December 1999, the UN General Assembly agreed to an unprecedented collaboration between the UN, the World Bank, the IMF and the WTO to explore policies and actions to find innovative ways to address the issue of mobilizing financial reserves for the full implementation of the outcome of the UN conferences and

summits of the 1990s. The General Assembly's High-Level Consultation on this 'Finance for Development' (FfD) process planned for the first quarter of 2002 has strong links with Rio+10. The proposed agenda will include mobilizing domestic and international financial resources for development; FDI and other private flows; and international trade.

Among the issues to be discussed in the FfD meetings, the outcome of the debate on ODA will particularly affect the finance agenda in Rio+10. In his advanced unedited report to the FfD Preparatory Committee, the UN Secretary-General calls for new commitment to the targets, saying that '[t]he prosperity in industrial countries and the policy reform efforts in developing countries make this a unique moment in which major increases in aid volumes and enhanced aid effectiveness are not only possible but could achieve a massive impact in terms of poverty reduction and of development'. The success or otherwise of Rio+10 is likely to depend to a large extent on the amount of progress that is made in the FfD process.

(ii) *Technology transfer*

Chapter 34 of Agenda 21 points out the importance of 'environmentally sound technologies' for sustainable development, and defines them as 'not just individual technologies, but total systems which include know-how, procedures, goods and services and equipment as well as organizational and managerial procedures'. It states that '[t]here is a need for favourable access to and transfer of environmentally sustainable technologies, in particular to developing countries, through supportive measures that promote technology cooperation and that should enable transfer of necessary technological know-how as well as building up of economic, technical and managerial capabilities'. It calls for action on the coordination of research, and on information dissemination, policy development, provision of financial resources and capacity-building, and highlights the need to maintain and protect environmentally sound indigenous technologies and to prevent the abuse of intellectual property rights.

Since 1992 technology transfer has been extensively discussed at CSD meetings. The most recent substantive discussion took place at CSD6 where key issues included:

- Public-private partnerships as a means for increasing access to and transfer of environmentally sound technologies (ESTs), and the need for 'legal and policy

frameworks that are conducive to long-term sustainable development and in particular to private sector investment in sustainable technology';

- public and market-based policy instruments for stimulating the development and uptake of sustainable technologies;
- financing programmes for small and medium-sized enterprises, including micro-credit initiatives; and
- education and training to develop skills in the use of ESTs.

Technology transfer has also been a key issue within negotiations on many MEAs, in particular the Kyoto Protocol and the Montreal Protocol on the control of ozone-depleting substances. As with the CSD, formal discussion of technology transfer as an issue has tended to lead to negotiating deadlocks. These two MEAs have, however, produced some interesting policy mechanisms aiming to promote private-sector technology transfer from North to South, including the Kyoto Protocol's clean development mechanism.

In Rio+10 the parties will be faced with the challenge of formulating agreed policy combinations for both the developed and the less developed countries. The policy proposals need to reflect the wide variety of technology needs and potential users while taking into account the central role that industry should play in the development and transfer of technology. Furthermore, technology transfer policies should be able to create the conditions for the emergence of self-sufficient markets for sustainable technologies, which will provide incentives for the industry to develop and supply new technologies and enable the private sector to make good returns on its investments. Last but not least, policy should also reflect the urgent need to deliver sustainable technology to the poor. In this regard an environment to enable mini-, small and medium-sized enterprises to access sustainable technology needs to be developed.

(iii) *Capacity-building*

Agenda 21 highlighted the importance of capacity-building – improving governmental and regulatory capacity to implement policies – in developing countries to enable Southern priorities to be reflected in international arrangements, as well as in the process of designing and implementing sustainable development projects. Chapter 37 of Agenda 21 indicated the need to promote 'an ongoing participatory process to define country needs and priorities in relation to Agenda 21 and in so doing to

¹⁰ OECD Development Assistance Committee, 1999.

strengthening human resource and institutional capabilities'. The latest decision at CSD6 recommended intensification of capacity-building efforts, based on participatory approaches, with the aim of having national sustainable development strategies or their equivalent in place for implementation by 2002, as called for by Rio+5 in 1997. Towards that goal, CSD encouraged, *inter alia*, sharing experiences and increasing South-South and sub-regional cooperation.

While developing countries clearly need to invest in capacity-building themselves, and while there is an important role for South-South cooperation and sharing of best practice, capacity-building is probably the most important role that ODA can take in the promotion of sustainable development in developing countries. Given the current downward trend in ODA, an important challenge for Rio+10 will be to define developing-country needs for capacity-building, and to highlight the ways in which investment in capacity-building can facilitate economic development and leverage private funding. One way of using Rio+10 to attract increased ODA might be to identify specific, ambitious capacity-building initiatives (e.g. for attracting FDI to the least developed countries and small states, or for radically increasing the development and geographical spread of micro-financing initiatives) and to campaign for international commitment to them.

(iv) Trade

Chapter 2 of Agenda 21 notes that: 'An open, multilateral trading system, supported by the adoption of sound environmental policies, would have a positive impact on the environment and contribute to sustainable development'.¹¹ Similarly, the preamble of the Agreement establishing the WTO states that trade should be conducted 'while allowing for the optimal use of the world's resources in accordance with the objective of sustainable development, seeking both to protect and preserve the environment and to enhance the means for doing so'.¹²

Although both of these key texts on trade and environment maintain a similar and positive outlook, their interrelationship is becoming increasingly controversial as the disputes that led to the deadlock in the WTO Ministerial Meeting in Seattle in late 1999 showed.

¹¹ United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, Chapter Two, Section B.

¹² Marrakesh Agreement Establishing the World Trade Organization, preamble, para. 2.

The 'trade and environment' agenda is a wide one. It encompasses the relationship between the WTO agreements and MEAs which employ trade restrictions to achieve their goals, including the Montreal and Cartagena Protocols, CITES (on endangered species) and the Basel Convention (on hazardous waste); the trade implications of eco-labelling and certification; the operationalization of the precautionary principle; and the environmental impact of trade-distorting subsidies. There are possible conflicts between, for example, the Trade-related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) Agreement and technology transfer schemes. Developing countries' demand for greater access to the new environmentally sustainable technologies (ESTs) on affordable terms needs to be readdressed in the light of TRIPS, in order to protect intellectual property rights without driving up the costs of ESTs. Resolution of these tensions will not be easy, but underlines the need for the effective integration of sustainable development objectives into all international institutions and agreements.

(v) Governance

The two main global environmental institutions established over the past thirty years have been UNEP and CSD. Other institutions are also of relevance to global environmental governance: within the UN system, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), of which the CSD is formally a functional commission, the UN General Assembly, the International Court of Justice and the various structures of interagency coordination all have parts to play. More than 200 MEAs form a central part of the framework for global environmental governance, often adopting and implementing dynamic and innovative solutions, though the negotiation of a new MEA can take many years and much effort. Finally, the decisions and actions of international financial and trade institutions – the GEF, the World Bank, the IMF, and the WTO – clearly have a considerable environmental impact.

Despite a number of notable successes, it is clear that the current system of global environmental governance is failing to deal adequately with the challenge of sustainable development. As UNEP's *Global Environmental Outlook 2000* report stated, 'the world is undergoing accelerating change, with internationally coordinated environmental stewardship lagging behind economic and social development'.¹³

¹³ UNEP, *Global Environmental Outlook 2000* (London: UNEP/Earthscan, 1999), p. xx.

On the eve of the tenth-year review of UNCED, it is clear that given the multitude of international organizations and agreements that exist, Rio+10 should focus on ways in which coordination between these different environmental tools can be enhanced.¹⁴ A number of more radical proposals, including the establishment of a World Environment Court and a World Environment Organization, have also been put forward – though generally without much consideration of the details and implications. The main problems with the existing institutional framework are a lack of resources and a lack of political will, and unless these are successfully addressed, any new institution would simply reproduce the weaknesses of the old.

Other methods of ensuring that other UN bodies, including the Commission on Sustainable Development and the UN General Assembly, work together more effectively to advance the implementation of Agenda 21 can also be pursued. And underpinning all other commitments, Rio+10 must give serious consideration to what the effective policy integration of the injection of sustainable development concerns and objectives would mean for national governments and, particularly, for international institutions.

Beyond Rio+10: conclusions

Rio+10 will be a wide-ranging event, and this paper can only scratch the surface of a few of the more important issues. Some general themes are, however, worth stressing:

- Rio+10 will be a failure if it ends up simply as a re-run of the negotiations and arguments of Rio. Concrete commitments are more important than agreements for agreements' sake; achievements are more important than processes. Rio+10 should serve as a forum to generate the political will needed at the highest levels to implement commitments.
- While ultimate objectives are important, smaller steps should not be ignored. The argument around the financing of sustainable development, for example, should not simply focus on total sums; it should also examine how existing flows can be made to work in support of sustainability objectives.

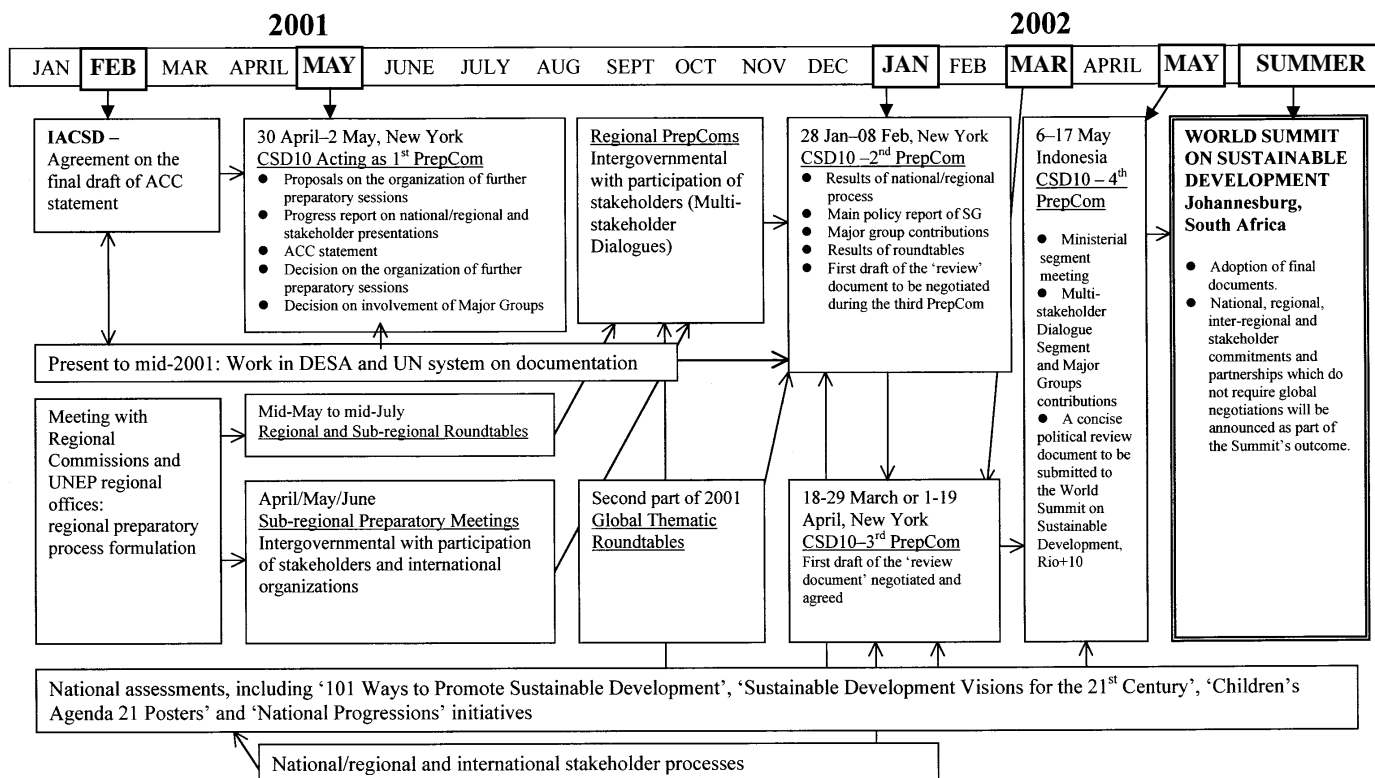
¹⁴ For further detail, see Joy Hyvarinen and Duncan Brack, *Global Environment Institutions: Analysis and Options for Change* (RIIA, September 2000, available from www.riia.org/Research/eep/eep.html).

● The concept of ‘sustainable development’ needs to be stressed in its original meaning. The term is now used so loosely that it is in danger of becoming valueless; some use it to mean simply ‘environmental protection’; others only to mean ‘development’. The genuine integration of economic development, social development and environmental protection should run through the whole conference and its aftermath.

● Rio+10 should address the need for increasing the efficiency of existing international environmental organizations. The review of the implementation of Agenda 21 commitments should set an example for the review of the implementation of key MEAs and international conferences such as the Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat).

North–South tensions dominated Rio, and have done in many other international forums since. Perhaps above all, Rio+10 should advocate stewardship for the ‘global environmental commons’ to overcome the barriers between developed and developing countries. To repeat Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s comment on Rio: ‘one day we will have to do better’. Rio+10 provides the opportunity to do better.

Figure 1: Preparation timeline for World Summit on Sustainable Development



Source: Reproduced with the permission of United Nations Division for Sustainable Development, *Rio+10 Timeline*, http://www.un.org/rio+10/web_pages/2002.pdf

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