

WSSD 2002: Issues and Outcomes

More than 35,000 people from 191 governments, inter- and non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, academia, and the scientific community traveled to Johannesburg last month to attend the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). There were 82 national leaders, 30 vice presidents, 74 ministers, and a smattering of royalty. More CEOs attended than heads of state. Secretary of State Colin Powell represented the U.S. government, along with envoys from the Environmental Protection Agency, Department of Energy, USAID, and Capitol Hill.

Judy Siegel and Dan Tunstall, two respected U.S. development experts, also attended and shared their perspectives on the summit at the opening session of International Resources Group's Discussion Forum. More than 40 professionals from the Washington community attended this informal roundtable to discuss the outcomes of the WSSD and what the summit promised for the future.

Access

The one clear priority for delegates, throughout the summit and in the resulting Plan of Implementation, was access. Reaffirming the UN Development Programme's Millennium Development Goals and the principles agreed to at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, the WSSD Plan of Implementation commits to improving the poor's access to range of services, like water, food, energy, housing, education. Special emphasis was also placed on "health literacy"—the capacity to obtain and

understand the basic information and services needed to make good health decisions. The plan concentrates on six objectives of sustainable development:

- ◆ Eradicating poverty.
- ◆ Changing unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.
- ◆ Protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development.
- ◆ Addressing sustainable development in a globalizing world.
- ◆ Combining health and sustainable development.
- ◆ Creating a regional focus for development—Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia and the Pacific, West Asia, Europe.

To reach their targets, the delegates called for strengthening three tiers of economic support—foreign direct investment from private sources, donors' official development assistance, and in-country financial mechanisms—to more comprehensively safeguard program funding.

Energy

Five key areas emerged in discussion on energy:

Setting targets and timetables for renewable energy supply.

Although a 15 percent target for renewable energy was pushed by the European Union and Brazil, Iceland, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Switzerland, and Tuvalu, it was labeled a "one-size-fits-all" approach by others, including Australia, Canada, Japan, OPEC members, and the United States. In the end, targets and timetables were excluded and "flexible" language was employed that called

Judy Siegel (left), Henri-Claude Bailly (center), and Dan Tunstall (right) at the first session of the IRG Discussion Forum, "WSSD: Issues and Outcomes."



For More Information...

Official summit site—<http://www.josummit.com>

UN Environment Programme—
<http://www.unep.org/wssd>

International Institute for Sustainable Development—
<http://www.iisd.ca/wssd/portal.html>

World Conservation Union—<http://www.iucn.org/wssd>

Earthwire—<http://www.earthwire.org/wssd>

for diversifying the energy supply through technology, substantially increasing the global share of renewable energy sources, recognizing the role of voluntary targets, and evaluating available data to review progress.

Improving access. The European Union also pushed for the inclusion of financial and technical assistance to improve energy access, key to which was developing alternatives to biomass. China and the G7, however, argued that it was premature to launch a global action plan for broad energy access. Eventually, the countries agreed to make joint efforts to: improve access to reliable and affordable energy services, reduce unsustainable use of biomass, and support a transition to cleaner fossil fuels.

Removing subsidies. Negotiators agreed to reduce distortions “where appropriate” by improving market signals, restructuring taxes, and phasing out harmful subsidies.

Adopting the Kyoto Protocol. Discussion centered mainly on language that called on governments to ensure that Kyoto comes into force, which Australia and the United States opposed along with any text urging all nations to ratify the treaty. But with Canada, China, India, and Russia officially committing to ratify the protocol at the summit, it became clear that Kyoto’s

targets for signing would be met without the United States’ cooperation, and in spite of its vocal opposition.

Establishing partnerships. More than 200 Type-2 partnerships (involving multiple public- and private-sector stakeholders) emerged from the summit, a quarter of them energy-related. Developing countries expressed a strong desire to be included as designers and implementers of partnership initiatives, not just recipients. The Global Village Energy Partnership, cosponsored by the World Bank, UNDP, and about 70 other entities, was a key part of the U.S. Clean Energy Initiative. Although the U.S. government eschewed establishing timetables, the strong initiative seemed to indicate that it planned to concentrate on actions rather than targets.

The connection between energy and security was not addressed at the summit, but the meetings marked the first time energy was broadly identified as a critical input to sustainable development.

The Future?

While the delegates set ambitious targets to improve development in nine areas—poverty, hunger, fisheries, water, health, sanitation, biodiversity, energy, and institutions—no methods or strategies were proposed for reaching them.

The decade since the original Rio Earth Summit has seen great progress toward sustainable development and poverty reduction. Yet if the WSSD’s 15-year goals are to be accomplished, specific, realistic near-term steps must be agreed on and financed. And regional and sectoral focuses must dominate the attempts to meet more general, global goals. The Type-2 partnerships that emerged from the WSSD are just the beginning of the essential public- and private-sector cooperation that must be created within and across the borders of the richest and poorest nations to accomplish real change.

Judy Siegel, president of the Energy and Security Group, participated at the WSSD as one of the founders of the Global Village Energy Partnership. She has more than 25 years of experience in the commercialization of renewable energy technologies in over 60 countries. Specializing in developing and implementing renewable energy projects in Latin America, Asia, and Africa, Ms. Siegel has served as president of the U.S. Export Council for Renewable Energy, deputy director of the World Bank Asia Alternative Energy Program, and managing director of the Winrock International Clean Energy Group.

Dan Tunstall is director of the World Resources Institute’s Information Program, which strengthens environmental information systems and reporting in developing countries and seeks to develop indicators of environmentally sustainable development. Principally interested in environmental indicators, the state of environmental reporting, and information policy, Mr. Tunstall helped organize and write the first edition of World Resources.

Forum Feedback

- ◆ Immense financial resources will be needed to execute the ambitious implementation plan in the absence of any firm commitment from summit delegates to channel funds toward this end.
 - ◆ Projected population trends were not considered in setting the time-bound targets, which essentially just cut current figures in half. This is extremely relevant to the amount of financing that will be required.
 - ◆ How relevant are global summits? Their scale is grand and approaches general. Disaggregating the discussion into a national or even regional level could be vastly more effective than the current methods, which peg hunger targets for Mali at the same level as those for the United States.
 - ◆ Targets need to be calibrated, possibly in a follow-up meeting, and only the feasible ones, say for the next five years, should be addressed.
- ◆ What is the cost of NOT accomplishing WSSD targets versus the cost of meeting them?
 - ◆ What does it take to handle a flood? A drought? An earthquake? Governments need to begin to anticipate the emergencies that will likely occur in the future—and plan for them in the present.
 - ◆ Promoting clean and efficient biomass use is important. Biomass is an abundant and sustainable resource if used properly, and it will continue to be the main source of energy for rural populations, particularly for cooking. Electricity is not a feasible fuel for rural industry, and programs should ensure that the energy source matches the energy need.
 - ◆ The summit did not address forest conservation, but Secretary Powell followed his summit attendance with a visit to the national parks of Gabon. Does this suggest that the U.S. government will focus on forests?



Summit Targets

- Poverty** Halve the proportion of people living on less than one dollar a day by 2015.
- Hunger** Reduce the number of people suffering from hunger from 815 million to 410 million by 2015.
- Fisheries** Fully replenish fishery stocks, now at one-quarter of capacity, by 2015.
- Water** Ensure that every country has an integrated water resource management strategy by 2015.
- Health** By 2015 reduce the mortality rates of children under 5 by two-thirds and of new mothers by three-quarters. By 2010 reduce HIV prevalence among people ages 15-24 by one-quarter.
- Sanitation** Halve the number of people who do not have access to fresh water and sanitation by 2015.
- Biodiversity** Achieve a “significant reduction” in the rate of species loss.
- Energy** “Substantially increase” the global share of renewable energy sources.
- Institutions** “Strengthen institutional arrangements for sustainable development” nationally, regionally, and internationally.

Note: WSSD targets were largely based on agreements previously adopted at the 1992 Rio Earth Summit and the 2000 Millennium Summit.

About the IRG Discussion Forum

The IRG Discussion Forum is a monthly roundtable for the Washington-area policy community. Building on the Central Asia Speaker Series held at IRG in spring 2002, the Discussion Forum focuses on public and private sector issues affecting international development—agriculture, energy, sustainability. Each session is informal, and off the record; guest speakers and attendees are participating in a personal capacity.

With the Discussion Forum, IRG hopes to foster an environment for sharing experiences, exchanging ideas, and creating new approaches to development.

Henri-Claude Bailly, chairman of the IRG Advisory Board and senior advisor to the president, moderates the IRG Discussion Forum. Mr. Bailly is the former chairman and CEO of Hagler Bailly, an international management and consulting firm to the energy and utility industries. He is a director of the Alliance to Save Energy and a member of the Advisory Council of the Energy Future Coalition.

Schedule

Thursday, October 3 The World Summit on Sustainable Development:
Issues and Outcomes

Thursday, November 7 Energy Poverty and Development

Thursday, December 12 Agriculture and Sustainable Development

For more information, email discussionforum@irgltd.com or call International Resources Group at 202-289-0100.

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