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WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Shall we dare to ask the question how sustainable is a world which promotes the strident and unabated leaps of development of some parts of the world, and which perpetuates, and even exacerbates, the underdevelopment and accompanying poverty and disease in other parts of the world?

Mohammed Valli Moosa
Environment and Tourism Minister
South Africa (host country to the Summit)

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), also known as Rio+10, is scheduled to be held from 2-11 September 2002 in Johannesburg. It will be a gathering of world governments, concerned citizens, United Nations agencies, multilateral financial institutions and other major actors to assess global change since the historic United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) of 1992. In Johannesburg, the world will take a critical look back at UNCED and seek to achieve a comprehensive, frank and useful review of the past ten years.

Looking Back

UNCED 1992, also known as the "Earth Summit," was held at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 3 - 14 June 1992 on the 20th anniversary of the first International Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm, 1972). It was a response to the felt need of the world community that environmental protection and natural resources management be integrated with socio-economic issues of poverty and underdevelopment. Simultaneously, a global NGO Forum was also held which was attended by an unprecedented number of NGO representatives outlining a vision for the future environmental and socio-economic development of the world.

Three important documents were adopted at the Rio Conference and signed by more than 178 governments:

1. *Agenda 21: A Comprehensive Plan of Action;*
2. *The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development;* and
3. *Statement of Principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests.*

Among the key features of Agenda 21 are the chapters dealing with the role of major groups: women, youth, indigenous peoples, NGOs, business and industry, workers and trade unions, science and technology, farmers and local authorities. Agenda 21 is the first UN document to extensively address the role of different stakeholders in the implementation of a global agreement. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created in December 1992 to ensure effective follow-up for UNCED principally by monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the agreements at the local, national, regional and international levels. The 55th General Assembly session of the United Nations decided in December 2000 that the CSD would serve as the central organizing body for Rio+10.

Moving Forward

WSSD 2002 aims, among other things, to answer the following questions: What has been accomplished since 1992? What have the participating countries done so far to implement Agenda 21? Have they adopted the National Sustainable Development Strategies and have they rated the conventions that aim to prevent loss of biodiversity or ensure women's rights as they agreed to do in 1992? What obstacles have they encountered? What lessons have they learned regarding what works and what does not? What new factors have emerged to change the picture? What mid-course corrections need to be made to reach the established goals? Where should further efforts be concentrated?

(Relevant documents and websites can be found in the section on Sustainable Development on the VI homepage: www.vivatinternational.org)

New Challenges

Certain progress has been made since the Rio conference in regard to putting the principles of sustainable development into action but much more needs to be done. Rio+10 will have to address certain other realities that either were not addressed at that time or have emerged recently. One is the impact of globalization and another is the impact of terrorism on efforts towards sustainable development. The Heinrich Boell Foundation and UNCED Forum invited NGOs to participate in an online forum to address a few important questions:

- Will the shock of September 11 create a new climate of international co-operation between North and South, East and West, providing fertile ground for a new global deal?

- Will the terrorist attacks shift media attention and priorities of governments away from the issues of poverty, environmental degradation and globalization that are the center of the Johannesburg agenda?

- Does the Johannesburg Agenda need to be reframed, for example in terms of (environmental) security or the protection of global common goods, of which peace is one of the most important?

- How will civil society react to the new developments? What can be done to make the World Summit a success under these new circumstances?

A New African Initiative

In recent months, African leaders have committed themselves to a *New African Initiative* in order to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustainable growth and development. They have declared that they will no longer allow themselves to be conditioned by circumstance. Africans will determine their own destiny and call on the rest of the world to complement their efforts. It is hoped that this initiative will get due attention at the summit.

(See: www.vivatinternational.org, WSSD and Beyond)

In fact, the terrorist attacks on September 11 are having an impact on the dates of the World Summit. The General Assembly is considering a proposal to change the dates to August 26 to September 4 so that the last day of the conference will not coincide with the anniversary of the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington.

Facing the future with determination

However, the issue of terrorism should not divert us from other serious problems the world is facing. The UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had this to say:

One is tempted to say that we must now focus all our energies on the struggle against terrorism, and on directly related issues. Yet if we should do so, we will be giving the terrorists a victory of a kind. Let us remember that none of the issues that faced us on 10 September has become less urgent. The number of people living on less than one dollar a day has not decreased. The numbers dying of HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and other preventable diseases have not decreased. The factors that cause the desert to advance, biodiversity to be lost, and the earth's atmosphere to warm have not decreased."

UN General Assembly November 10, 2001

The Process leading to the Summit

The summit will be preceded by regional preparatory committee meetings (PrepComs) in all regions of the world. These will be coordinated by The UN Regional Economic Commissions, the regional offices of the UN Environment Program, the UN Development Program Regional Bureau and the CSD Secretariat. The first Preparatory Committee (PrepCom I) meeting was held at the UN Headquarters in New York from 30 April to 2 May 2001. Others are scheduled for 28 January to 8 February 2002 (PrepCom II), 25 March to 5 April 2002 (PrepCom III) and 27 May to 7 June 2002 (PrepCom IV, to be held in Jakarta, Indonesia)

PrepCom I, in resolution 2001/PC/1, encouraged further participation of NGOs in the preparatory process and the Summit. With this in mind, the secretariat of the Summit has invited nonaccredited NGOs to apply for accreditation to the PrepComs and the Summit. Vivat International has applied.

The Contribution of Vivat International to the Process

Aware that sustainable development is a significant factor in the integrity of creation, Vivat International has given great importance to the process leading to the Summit. Lawrence Correa, has been representing VI in the PrepComs, workshops and meetings connected with the issue of sustainable development. He has done so with the belief that many of our members are involved in activities and programs promoting sustainable development. The position he takes in the discussions and in statements to the PrepComs and the final Summit at Johannesburg will be all the stronger and more credible if they are based on reports, experiences, analysis and comments of the members in the field. You are therefore highly encouraged to send reports, insights and ideas to him (e-mail address: lany@vivatinternational.org).

ON-THE-GROUND INVOLVEMENT OF VIVAT MEMBERS

We thank the many VI members who have informed us directly of their initiatives and whose information provides such an important basis for our work. Unfortunately, there is not enough space to introduce all of them in this issue but here are some of the SSpS and SVD activities that have communicated with us.

POVERTY ERADICATION

Mumbai, India: The Urban Community Development Center (UCDC) works with slum-dwellers and low-income groups through social, medical, educational, and occupational programs.

Quilmes, Argentina: Solidaridad, Caritas Quilmes promotes the integral development of the poorest of the poor, and mobilizes economic resources for the poor.

USA-South SVD JPIC: advocated with Members of the US Congress in support of 100% cancellation of the debts owed by the least developed countries.

Netherlands and Belgium SVD JPIC: gives priority to

campaigns for cancellation of poor country debt, increased spending for development in poor countries, and for legislation against the arms-trade.

Chicago, USA SSpS JPIC: supports work to promote systemic change, follows ethical investment guidelines, and monitors US federal and state governments.

Bohol, Philippines: Divine Word College of Tagbilaran's Center for Local Governance (DWCT-CLG) provides training programs and technical assistance to local government units and various sectors of civil society.

Addis Ababa, Ethiopia SSpS JPIC: promotes developmental programs such as digging wells, growing vegeta-

bles, raising poultry, etc.

Pangasinan, Philippines: Divine Word Academy of Dagupan does advocacy work for poverty eradication.

Manila, Philippines SVD JPIC: does advocacy work, mainly for debt cancellation.

WOMEN AND CHILDREN

Chicago, USA SSpS JPIC: supports Project Irene, an endeavor to curb violence against women and children and to promote income support, housing, jobs and jobtraining.

Posadas, Argentina: Lidia Estela Orue, SSpS, of Colegio Santa Maria de Posadas, has organized a three-year program to help students under-

stand the issues of women and youth in different continents.

North Germany Province SSps JPIC: works for and with disadvantaged women, migrant women, and victims of commercial trafficking.

Livingstone, Zambia SSps JPIC: coordinates the Behavioral Change Process Program, an education for life program that targets groups such as youth, children, parents, adults.

They also provide help for orphans, girls who have become prostitutes for economic survival, and children who miss school to help their parents work.

Mindoro, Philippines: Fr. German Mehler, SVD, works with children with harelip and cleft-palates.

He averages 100 children a year for various stages of surgical reconstruction.

ECOLOGY AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Germany SVD JPIC: networks with Doctors Without Borders on the issue of TRIPS (Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights), and supports TRIPS Action Network against skyrocketing medicine prices.

Agusan, Philippines SVD JPIC (PHS): works for local self-reliance in food through the collection of seed lines and experimental planting to develop new varieties.

Sao Paulo, Brazil SVD JPIC: gives courses on environment and law to local leaders and municipal councilors.

Philippines North SSps JPIC: promotes renewable energy and organic fertilizer by producing methane gas from

a biogas digester.

St. Gabriel, Austria SVD JPIC: promotes the use of solar energy in homes and greenhouses, the use of biogas for motor vehicles, and the recycling of garbage.

Manila, Philippines PHC SVD JPIC: promotes alternate farm technology and waste management.

Amazonia, Brazil SVD JPIC: works with the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT) to protect the human rights of the landless in Brazil.

Cebu, Philippines: The Water Resource Center initiated by Herman van Engelen, SVD, provides advice and technical assistance on installing artesian wells and using solar power to operate the water supply.

HIV/AIDS

Nkawkaw, Ghana: SSps Hospital aims to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS and establishes support systems for persons living with AIDS.

Ngondi, Congo: Bro. Fabien Fula, SVD, dedicates his pastoral ministry to the prevention of HIV/AIDS, and care for its victims.

Livingstone, Zambia SSps JPIC: educates about the dangers of HIV/AIDS and early recognition of symptoms.

For every 10 persons affected with HIV/AIDS, a support group has been formed.

Nairobi, Kenya SVD JPIC: organizes mixed groups of women and men to deal with local issues and increase sensitivity to the voices of women.

REFUGEES AND MIGRANTS

Europe Zonal SVD-SSps JPIC: This ministry is a priority of the Zone. It focuses on the most marginalized and vulnerable such as the undocumented and aims at a holistic approach.

Atambua, Timor SSps JPIC: attends to hundreds of thousands of refugees from East Timor, concentrating on the health needs.

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES

Mindoro, Philippines SVD-SSps JPIC: jointly do advocacy for the rights of the Mangyan people of Mindoro, particularly through protests against mining operations on the island, both for the retention of traditional Mangyan lands and the protection of the environment.

El Transito, Chile SSps JPIC: accompanies the indigenous peoples in the area of the Cordillera Mountains.

Tagbilaran, Philippines SSps JPIC: facilitated and funded the construction of the Badjao Community Hall for the indigenous peoples of Daius, Bohol.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Quezon City, Philippines, SVD JPIC Preso Foundation, Prison Ministry does advocacy to place prison reform higher on the agenda of the United Nations. They support the UN's leadership in the abolition of the death penalty and focus on the basic human rights of prisoners. They network with CURE (Citizens United for Rehabilitation of Errants), an international organization.

(Anthony Ranada, SVD, President of Preso Foundation)