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World Summit on Sustainable Development : A First Critical Assessment

By Prof. Dr. Uwe Holtz, University of Bonn¹

For Friends of the Earth and many like-minded organizations, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg was a failure, an opportunity wasted, the triumph of "hard" neo-liberal values, a tragedy for the poor and the environment. For them the Johannesburg *Implementation Plan* is an incredibly weak agreement. Many observers are following this verdict.

I don't share this overall negative view: yes, there is disappointment, but progress in many areas, too; the "soft" Rio development paradigm of sustainable, human development was strengthened; by definition, the 10-day mega-conference with more than 20,000 officially registered participants was not able to adopt an allworld problems-solving agreement legally binding on all the states of the globe. The critical issue is what will happen with poverty eradication and the protection of natural resources in the years to come. So it is too early for final judgements; but let us try to assess preliminarily the World Summit. One of the innovations of the meeting was that it went beyond political declarations to enshrine the concept of cooperation (sometimes confrontational) and partnerships by and between governments, UN agencies, environmental and other non-governmental groups, local authorities and the private sector.

There were four WSSD outcomes:

- A Political Declaration,
- A Plan of Implementation,
- Voluntary partnership initiatives,
- Side events and activities, documents and resolutions from a huge variety of organisations and institutions.

Political Declaration

The representatives of 192 countries unanimously adopted the *Political Declaration*. The *Declaration* includes a 10-year review since Rio: The Rio Summit was a significant milestone that set a new agenda for sustainable development. Some progress was made. However, the deep fault line that divides human society between the rich and the poor and the ever-

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As a special guest of the UN Secretary-General, Prof. Holtz participated in the World Summit (Johannesburg, 26 August - 4 September 2002). He is member of the UN Panel of Eminent Personalities to consider the poverty-environment nexus in the context of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification/UNCCD and was Chair of the German Bundestag committee on development cooperation, 1974-1994.

increasing gap between the developed and developing worlds pose a major threat to global prosperity, security and stability; the global environment continues to suffer; the benefits and costs of globalization are unevenly distributed, with developing countries facing special difficulties in meeting this challenge. Worldwide conditions such as chronic hunger, armed conflicts, organized crime and corruption, natural disasters, terrorism, incitement to racial, ethnic, religious hatreds, and chronic diseases severely endanger the sustainable development of our people.

This uncoloured picture presents the right diagnosis and starting point for the therapy and for concrete efforts. The representatives reaffirm the commitment to sustainable development and promise to build a humane, equitable and caring global society, united by a common determination to save our planet, promote human development and achieve universal prosperity and peace. They assume the collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – at local, national, regional and global levels while remaining committed to the indivisibility of human dignity for all and to democratic systems as well as demanding democratic global governance with more effective and accountable international and multilateral institutions.

Just nice words? More than that. All these objectives constitute the essential elements of the development paradigm of sustainable, human development. The *Declaration* is a very important reference document when it comes to the Johannesburg vision. In Johannesburg delegates of some countries tried to renegotiate some of the Rio principles. They had a roll back strategy in mind, but did not succeed: the Rio principles of common but differentiated responsibility and on the precautionary principle were renewed.

Plan of Implementation

The *Plan of Implementation* was agreed by consensus; several delegations made some reservations (like the U.S.), others went beyond the agreed text (like the EU). During the Summit, Germany – and Denmark acting on behalf of the EU – proved leadership and played a very constructive role.

Johannesburg reaffirmed Rio, the outcomes of the recent international conferences and the Millennium Development Goals. One of the major Johannesburg objectives was to broaden the agenda and to reach agreements with specific targets and timetables. Kofi Annan pushed – quite successfully – his WEHAB initiative in the areas of water, energy, health, agriculture and bio-diversity. The balance is mixed, more positive than negative with regard to the text.

Rather promising achievements (i.a.):

- Halve the proportion of people without safe drinking water and adequate sanitation by 2015. (Failure to constrain the privatisation of water)
- A World Trade Organisation accord on patents should not prevent poor countries providing medicines to all.
- Cease destructive fishing practices and establish marine protected areas and networks by 2012 and maintain or restore fish stocks to levels that can be sustainably harvested by not later than 2015.
- Develop a 10-year plan to ensure goods are produced and consumed in a way that does not destroy the environment.
- Reduce significantly biodiversity loss by 2010.
- Combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought and floods. In a strong political signal the Summit called on the Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to take action on the recommendations of the GEF Council concerning the designation of land degradation, desertification and deforestation, as a focal area of GEF as a means of GEF support for the successful implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification, and it was a real breakthrough consequently to ask to consider making GEF a financial mechanism of the Convention.
- Agree on voluntary regional and national targets for access to renewable energy like solar, wind and wave energy and on the need for improvements to energy access so that all people should have access to conventional forms of energy. The US and OPEC blocked any timetable as they had already blocked, two years ago, the entry of energy related goals into the Millennium Development Goals. (Chancellor Gerhard Schröder invited delegates to Germany for an international conference on renewable energies, announced Germany's participation in the global energy agency network and will to develop its successful cooperation in the energy sphere with the developing countries into a strategic partnership, and promised to provide over the next five years 500 million euro to promote cooperation on renewable energies. The EU announced an energy initiative which is going beyond the Summit text and which is joined by many dozens of countries.)
- Support the full implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development/NEPAD.
- Encourage industry and corporations to improve social and environmental performance through voluntary initiatives, including environmental management systems, codes of conduct, certification and public reporting on environmental and social issues.

Rather disappointing results:

Halve the number of the world's poor living on less than \$1 a day by 2015. However no concrete agreements were reached to enhance the international environment conducive to the realisation of these targets, for instance, by reducing trade-distorting farm subsidies in the rich countries (1 billion US-\$ per day!).

The central role of job creation in poverty reduction was not adequately recognised.

Another shortcoming are the provisions to increase substantially the official development assistance (ODA). The Implementation Plan simply urges the developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP as ODA to developing countries – it is a commitment with no figures.

Anyhow some pledges were made: the EU and Germany announced an ODA increase to 0.39 respectively 0.36 percent; Luxembourg promised an ODA increase from 0.85 percent to 1 percent by 2005 (oh happy small Luxembourg!), Canada will double ODA until 2010, and the United States which earmarks only about 0.1 percent of its GDP to foreign aid reiterated the pledge to raise ODA by 50 percent every year from now.

The Summit's call for the establishment of a voluntary "world solidarity fund" to eradicate poverty and to promote social and human development in the developing countries is not a step forward in the right direction – there is no need for more institutions, there is a need for more and better used money, for more appropriate efforts and better governance in the respective countries and for a better international enabling environment.

There are many paragraphs in the *Plan* allowing several interpretations. Some argue what should have been an Earth summit has been infiltrated and taken over by trade and neo-liberalism. The EU, supported by developing countries and the pressure by many NGOs, prevented the World Trade Organisation taking over the Summit.

However, I miss a clear plea for an international social and environmentally sound market economy. The booklet "The Eco-Social Market Economy – Strategies for the Survival of Humankind" presented in a side event could have given enough food for thought.

Voluntary partnership initiatives

The *Implementation Plan* had been actioned in terms of partnerships through some big announcements on partnerships. At the end of the Summit the UN was able to publish a remarkable list of more than 200 proposed development partnerships for implementation (water-provision, energy, poverty reduction etc.), involving all actors, including governments, civil society and the private sector.

Side events

Hundreds of side events were organized around the official summit meetings. Reference could be made to the events organised by parliamentarians under the umbrella of the Inter-Parliamentary Union, by governments, aid agencies, mayors and representatives of local authorities, trade unions, private companies, civil society organisations and scientists – all of them with German participation - and by international organisations. They influenced the proceedings in Johannesburg (for example, International Labour Organisation, indigenous peoples representatives). I'm sure that many of them will have an impact on future thinking and action.

In conclusion

The Summit instigated a global action among a wide range of actors. It offers a road map for sustainable, human development that reduces poverty while protecting the environment and a path that may work for all people, rich and poor, today and tomorrow. It is important that Johannesburg heralds the transition from words to action. The agreements of Johannesburg will be implemented by global governance, too, but primarily by national governments and actions on a national as well as local and regional level. Let us join President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Kofi Annan in the hope – and translating it into reality – that Johannesburg will be a wake-up call, a turning point for millions of people living in indecent, inhuman conditions, and for a world in crisis.

– Kommunikation Global

World Summit on Sustainable Development : A Critical Assessment

By Prof. Dr. Uwe Holtz²,

(Lecture at the University of Bonn, BIMUN/Bonn International Model United Nations, 3.12.02)



For Friends of the Earth and many like-minded organizations, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg was a failure, an opportunity wasted, the triumph of “hard” neo-liberal values, a tragedy for the poor and the environment. For them the Johannesburg *Implementation Plan* is an incredibly weak agreement. Many observers, including journalists, were following this verdict.

I don't share this overall negative view: yes, there is disappointment, but progress in many areas, too; the “soft” Rio development paradigm of sustainable, human development was strengthened; by definition, the 10-day mega-conference with more than 20,000 officially registered participants was not able to adopt an allworld problems-solving agreement legally binding on all the states of the globe. By the way, there was not gathered a world parliament with democratic legitimacy.

The critical issue is what will happen with poverty eradication and the protection of natural resources in the years to come. So it is too early for final judgements; but let us try to assess preliminarily the World Summit.

The views of civil society were given prominence at the Summit in recognition of the key role of civil society in implementing the outcomes and in promoting partnership initiatives.

² As a special guest of the UN Secretary-General, Prof. Holtz participated in the World Summit (Johannesburg, 26 August - 4 September, 2002). He is member of the UN Panel of Eminent Personalities to consider the poverty-environment nexus in the context of the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification/UNCCD and was Chair of the German Bundestag committee on development cooperation, 1974-1994.

One of the innovations of the meeting was that it went beyond political declarations to enshrine the concept of cooperation (sometimes confrontational) and partnerships by and between among others governments, UN agencies, private companies, environmental and other non-governmental groups.

The Summit reaffirmed sustainable development as a central element of the international agenda and gave new impetus to global action to fight poverty and protect the environment.

There were four WSSD outcomes:

- A Political Declaration,
- A Plan of Implementation,
- Voluntary partnership initiatives,
- Side events and activities, documents and resolutions from a huge variety of organisations and institutions.

Political Declaration

The representatives of 192 countries unanimously adopted the *Political Declaration*. The *Declaration* includes a 10-year review since Rio: The Rio Summit was a significant milestone that set a new agenda for sustainable development. Some progress was made.

(cf. the 3 “Rio”-environmental Conventions, thousands of “Local Agendas 21”, alone 2.300 in Germany; the concept of “sustainable, human development” as a widely recognized new development paradigm > look at the new ACP-EU Partnership Agreement, signed in Cotonou in June 2000 where the objectives and development strategies are described in Art. 1 as follows:

The partnership shall be centred on the objective of reducing and eventually eradicating poverty consistent with the objectives of sustainable development and the gradual integration of the ACP countries into the world economy. These objectives and the Parties’ international commitments shall inform all development strategies and shall be tackled through an integrated approach taking account at the same time of the political, economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of development.)

However,

the deep fault line that divides human society between the rich and the poor and the ever-increasing gap between the developed and developing worlds pose a major threat to global prosperity, security and stability;

the global environment continues to suffer;

the benefits and costs of globalization are unevenly distributed, with developing countries facing special difficulties in meeting this challenge.

In Rio, just 10 years ago, globalisation was not an issue. Now, in art. 14 of the Political Declaration it is realised:

“Globalization has added a new dimension to these challenges. The rapid integration of markets, mobility of capital and significant increases in investment flows around the world have opened new challenges and opportunities for the pursuit of sustainable development. But the benefits and costs of globalization are unevenly distributed, with developing countries facing special difficulties in meeting this challenge.”

Worldwide conditions such as chronic hunger, armed conflicts, organized crime and corruption, natural disasters, terrorism, incitement to racial, ethnic, religious hatreds, and chronic diseases severely endanger the sustainable development of our people.

This uncoloured picture presents the right diagnosis and starting point for the therapy and for concrete efforts.

In Johannesburg, the government representatives reaffirmed the commitment to sustainable development and promised to build a humane, equitable and caring global society, united by a common determination to save our planet, promote human development and achieve universal prosperity and peace.

They assumed the collective responsibility to advance and strengthen the interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars of sustainable development – economic development, social development and environmental protection – at local, national, regional and global levels while remaining committed to the indivisibility of human dignity for all and to democratic systems as well as demanding democratic global governance with more effective and accountable international and multilateral institutions.

Just nice words? More than that. All these objectives constitute the essential elements of the development paradigm of sustainable, human development. The *Declaration* is a very important reference document when it comes to the Johannesburg vision.

Plan of Implementation

The *Plan of Implementation (Action)* was agreed by consensus; several delegations made some reservations (like the U.S.), others went beyond the agreed text (like the EU). During the Summit, Germany – and Denmark acting on behalf of the EU –

proved leadership and played a very constructive role. During the long, very often difficult negotiations mainly three groupings emerged:

1. The G 77 + China (more than 100 developing countries) - however quite heterogeneous,
2. the US and some other countries like Japan, Canada, and New Zealand, (in the UN terminology JUSCANZ),
3. the European Union which tried to build bridges among the two other groups.

Johannesburg reaffirmed Rio and its Agenda 21, the outcomes of the recent international conferences and the Millennium Development Goals. In Johannesburg delegates of some countries tried to renegotiate some of the Rio principles. They had a roll back strategy in mind, but did not succeed: the Rio principles of common but differentiated responsibility and on the precautionary principle in the field of environment were renewed.

One of the major Johannesburg objectives was to broaden the agenda and to reach agreements with specific targets and timetables. Kofi Annan pushed – quite successfully – his WEHAB initiative in the areas of water, energy, health, agriculture and bio-diversity.

First some remarks with respect to the philosophy lying behind the Implementation Plan.

As political scientist I consider to be the most important progress in comparison with Rio ten years ago the emphasis laid on democracy. What is essential for achieving sustainable development? Now the answer is: Democratic institutions, respect for human rights, rule of law, good governance within each country and at the international level, anti-corruption measures, gender equality. Long time - since decolonization in the sixties of the last century - you could hear: first development, then democracy. The result was very often there was neither development nor democracy.

The first paragraphs reveal this philosophy. Let me quote:

We acknowledge the importance of ethics for sustainable development, and therefore we emphasize the need to consider ethics in the implementation of Agenda 21.

Poverty eradication, changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption, and protecting and managing the natural resource base of economic and social development are overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development.

As a result of globalization, external factors have become critical in determining the success or failure of developing countries in their national efforts. The gap between

developed and developing countries points to the continued need for a dynamic and enabling international economic environment supportive of international cooperation, particularly in the areas of finance, technology transfer, debt and trade, and full and effective participation of developing countries in global decision-making, if the momentum for global progress towards sustainable development is to be maintained and increased.

Peace, security, stability and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the right to development, as well as respect for cultural diversity, are essential for achieving sustainable development and ensuring that sustainable development benefits all.

The balance is mixed, more positive than negative with regard to the text.

A. 13 rather promising achievements are the following demands (i.a.):

1. Halve the proportion of people without safe drinking water and adequate sanitation by 2015. (failure to constrain the privatisation of water)
2. Promote mutual supportiveness between the multilateral environmental agreements and the multilateral trading system. (that means: the action plan asserts that the international environmental agreements are not - as many environmentalists had feared subordinate to WTO rules.)
3. A World Trade Organisation accord on patents should not prevent poor countries providing medicines to all people.
4. According to the action plan, health care is to respect human rights and basic liberties. Thus, the summit decries the mutilation of female genitals and human rights-violating discrimination of women. At German initiative, a move was blocked to qualify human rights in the health sector. No one will be allowed to cite alleged cultural or religious traditions if these violate human rights.
5. To use and produce chemicals in ways that do not lead to significant adverse effects on human health and the environment by 2020.
6. Cease destructive fishing practices and establish marine protected areas and networks by 2012 and maintain or restore fish stocks to levels that can be sustainably harvested by not later than 2015.
7. Develop a 10-year plan to ensure goods are produced and consumed in a way that does not destroy the environment.
8. Reduce significantly biodiversity loss by 2010. Slow the extinction of flora and fauna distinctly by 2010 - an important signal for the preservation of biodiversity. Benefits from the use of genetic resources are in future to be distributed more fairly. For this purpose, negotiations on an international regime within the framework of the UN Convention on Biodiversity are to be taken up.

The German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) took a strong line on this demand of the developing countries.

9. Combat desertification, mitigate the effects of drought and floods and provide adequate and predictable financial resources to implement the UN Convention to Combat Desertification as one of the tools for poverty eradication. In a strong political signal the Summit called on the Second Assembly of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to take action on the recommendations of the GEF Council concerning the designation of land degradation, desertification and deforestation, as a focal area of GEF as a means of GEF support for the successful implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification. Agreement was reached to the replenishment of the Global Environment Facility, with a total of \$3 billion (\$2.92 billion announced pre-Summit and \$80 million added by EU in Johannesburg). And it was a real breakthrough consequently to ask to consider making GEF a financial mechanism of the Convention. (The GEF Assembly took these requested actions one month later in Beijing.)
10. Environmentally harmful subsidies are to be phased out. This means above all subsidized coal.
11. Agree on voluntary regional and national targets for access to renewable energy like solar, wind and wave energy and on the need for improvements to energy access so that all people should have access to conventional forms of energy. The US and OPEC blocked any timetable as they had already blocked, two years ago, the entry of energy related goals into the Millennium Development Goals. (Chancellor Gerhard Schröder invited delegates to Germany for an international conference on renewable energies (probably in Bonn), announced Germany's participation in the global energy agency network and will to develop its successful cooperation in the energy sphere with the developing countries into a strategic partnership, and promised to provide over the next five years 500 million euro to promote cooperation on renewable energies. The EU announced an energy initiative which is going beyond the Summit text and which is joined by many dozens of countries.)
12. Support the full implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development/NEPAD.
13. Encourage industry and corporations to improve social and environmental performance through voluntary initiatives, including environmental management systems, codes of conduct, certification and public reporting on environmental and social issues. The responsibility of larger corporations was never mentioned in the 1992 Rio declarations.

B. 6 rather disappointing results:

1. Halve the number of the world's poor living on less than \$1 a day by 2015. However no concrete agreements were reached to enhance the international environment conducive to the realisation of these targets, for instance, by reducing trade-distorting farm subsidies in the rich countries. Mainly developing nations had demanded a clear cutback in agricultural subsidies of industrial countries (1 billion US-\$ per day!).
2. The central role of job creation in poverty reduction was not adequately recognised.
3. Another shortcoming are the provisions to increase substantially the official development assistance (ODA). It was an omission that the World Summit gave hardly any thought to innovative forms of financing for development (a currency transaction tax, charges for use of global goods), but rather rested on the wilted laurels of Monterrey. The question of how the internationally agreed Millennium goals, were to be financed remained open. The Implementation Plan simply urges the developed countries that have not done so to make concrete efforts towards achieving the target of 0.7 per cent of GNP/GNE as ODA to developing countries – it is a commitment with no figures.
4. The problem of demographic explosion and birth control are not mentioned - a strange “unholy” coalition of the Vatican, the US and islamic states worked for it. (The United Nations have in prior declarations ranked the right to birth control as a belonging to the catalogue of human rights.)
5. The Summit's call for the establishment of a voluntary “world solidarity fund” to eradicate poverty and to promote social and human development in the developing countries is not a step forward in the right direction – there is no need for more institutions, there is a need for more and better used money, for more appropriate efforts and better governance in the respective countries and for a better international enabling environment.
6. There are many paragraphs in the *Plan* allowing several interpretations. Some argue what should have been an Earth summit has been infiltrated and taken over by trade and neo-liberalism. The EU, supported by developing countries and the pressure by many NGOs, prevented the World Trade Organisation taking over the Summit. However, I miss a clear plea for an international social and environmentally sound market economy. The booklet “The Eco-Social Market Economy – Strategies for the Survival of Humankind” presented in a side event could have given enough food for thought.

C. genius loci-Effects:

Let me mention a certain spirit of Johannesburg . The conference spirit ‘seduced’ some governments to send positive signals:

- Russia, Canada, and China announced to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. Unfortunately, the United States is not at all willing to ratify the Protocol.
- Some pledges to increase development assistance were made: the EU and Germany announced an ODA increase to 0.39 respectively 0.36 percent; Luxembourg promised an ODA increase from 0.85 percent to 1 percent by 2005 (oh happy small Luxembourg!), Canada will double ODA until 2010, and the United States which earmarks only about 0.1 percent of its GDP to foreign aid reiterated the pledge to raise ODA by 50 percent every year from now.

Voluntary partnership initiatives

The *Implementation Plan* had been actioned in terms of partnerships through some big announcements. A key consequence of the Summit was the emergence of a wide range of public-private partnerships that will promote sustainable development on the ground, where it counts. Over 220 partnerships (with \$235 million in resources) were identified in advance of the Summit and around 60 partnerships were announced during the Summit by a variety of countries - development partnerships for implementation (water-provision, energy, poverty reduction etc.), involving all actors, including governments, civil society and the private sector whose goal is implementation of the action plan and have declared themselves willing to subject their work to independent review. More than any political declaration, these partnerships offer tangible hope for improving the daily lives of millions around the world who have no access to sufficient food, clean water, or reliable energy.

Side events

Over 8,000 civil society participants attended the Summit, reinforced by parallel events which included major groups, such as, NGOs, women, indigenous people, youth, farmers, trade unions, business leaders, the scientific and technological community and local authorities as well as Chief Justices from various countries.

Hundreds of side events and initiatives were organized around the official summit meetings. Reference could be also made to the events organised by parliamentarians under the umbrella of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (what I’m missing is a parliamentary assembly of the UN, a stronger and official parliamentary involvement in all major conferences and parliamentary monitoring

of powerful institutions like the World Bank or the WTO), by governments, aid agencies, mayors and representatives of local authorities. They all influenced the proceedings in Johannesburg (for example, International Labour Organisation, indigenous peoples representatives). I'm sure that many of them will have an impact on future thinking and action.

Here are some examples of such initiatives:

- The World Mayors' Conference agreed to advance sustainable development via local Agenda 21 groups more effectively and give each other mutual support by means of partnerships.
- The Economic Council for Sustainable Development, in which leading companies are represented, got together with Greenpeace in order to work towards greater observance of social and ecological principles by corporate managements.
- Members of local and national parliaments founded the initiative "Parliamentarians' Implementation Watch", which with the support of the World Bank and UNDP is to press for realisation of the Millennium Development Goals.
- The scientific community provided significant inputs to the Action Plan which translating them into reality could help abolish scientific apartheid which divides the south from the north:

Art. 101: Assist developing countries in building capacity to access a larger share of multilateral and global research and development programmes. In this regard, strengthen and, where appropriate, create centres for sustainable development in developing countries.

103. Improve policy and decision-making at all levels through, inter alia, improved collaboration between natural and social scientists, and between scientists and policy makers, including through urgent actions at all levels to:

(a) Increase the use of scientific knowledge and technology, and increase the beneficial use of local and indigenous knowledge in a manner respectful of the holders of that knowledge and consistent with national law;

(b) Make greater use of integrated scientific assessments, risk assessments and interdisciplinary and intersectoral approaches ...

105. Establish regular channels between policy makers and the scientific community for requesting and receiving science and technology advice for the implementation of Agenda 21, and create and strengthen networks for science and education for sustainable development, at all levels, with the aim of sharing knowledge, experience and best practices and building scientific capacities, particularly in developing countries.

106. Use information and communication technologies, where appropriate, as tools to increase the frequency of communication and the sharing of experience and knowledge, and to improve the quality of and access to information and communications technology in all countries ...

In conclusion

The Summit instigated a global action among a wide range of actors. It offers a road map for sustainable, human development that reduces poverty while protecting the environment and a path that may work for all people, rich and poor, today and tomorrow. “The World Summit thus gave important impulses for sustainable development in the full meaning of the term” - Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul, the German Federal Minister for Development Cooperation.

It is important that Johannesburg heralds the transition from words to action. The agreements of Johannesburg will be implemented by global governance, too, but primarily by national governments and actions on a national as well as local and regional level.

Let us join President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa and Kofi Annan in the hope – and translating it into reality – that Johannesburg will be a wake-up call, a turning point for millions of people living in indecent, inhuman conditions, and for a world in crisis.