



Note No. 133/2009

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Sustainable Development (DESA) and with reference to the letter from the Director of the Division for Sustainable Development dated 19 May 2009, has the honour to submit herewith the views of South African Government on a High-Level event on sustainable development in order to assist the preparation of the report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations requested by the resolution 63/212 of the General Assembly.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of South Africa to the United Nations avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for the Sustainable Development (DESA) the assurances of its highest consideration.

New York
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INPUT FROM SOUTH AFRICA ON THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 63/212 ON THE HOLDING A HIGH LEVEL EVENT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

South Africa is of the opinion that a high level event on sustainable development is an opportune moment to reflect on 30 years of progress in the debate on environment and sustainable development, and to look ahead, towards the next 10 years. The last few decades have seen several breakthrough events which have steered the debate, guided action and achieved political commitment towards the implementation of sustainable development. These are reflected below:

- In 1972, the Stockholm Conference was the UNs first major conference on international environmental issues, marking a turning point in the development of international environmental politics.
- In 1992, the Rio Conference on Environment and Development provided the fundamental principles and the programme of action for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century. It was a breakthrough conference in that it paved the way for a culture of implementation of sustainable development, recognizing the role of all actors in the process - governments, stakeholders and the UN system.
- In 2002, 10 years later at the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development, Parties agreed on the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. The JPOI builds on the achievements of the Rio Summit, seeking to expedite its implementation, and further integrates the 3 pillars of sustainable development, namely- economic development, social development and environmental management - as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars. In 2002, sustainable development was specifically located in the context of the urgency to:
 - Eradicate poverty and implement the goals and targets of the Millennium Declaration
 - Change unsustainable patterns of consumption and production
 - Manage the natural resources as the basis of economic and social development.

Stockholm, Rio and Johannesburg not only defined and conceptualised sustainable development, they shifted global economic, social and environmental debates and initiated a targeted process of implementation.

Today, 2009, 17 years after the Rio Summit, 9 years after the Global Summit that agreed the Millennium Development Goals; and 7 years after the WSSD in JHB, the world is significantly different to that in 1972, 1992, and even 2002.

The events in the recent few years have yet again highlighted the importance of the interconnectedness of our economies and the need to expedite

implementation of sustainable development. In 2009, we live in world in which the 3 legs of that interdependent relationship are threatened. We are faced with a global economic crisis; increasing levels of poverty, and critical concerns related to land degradation, food and water security, energy prices and sustainability; and of course climate change. The food, energy and financial crises have had a compounding negative effect on development efforts, pushing back progress towards eradicating poverty.

South Africa is of the opinion that a high level event on sustainable development would be an important opportunity to take stock, and explore the implications of our current global context and how we implement our global sustainable development commitments in the future.

South Africa envisages objectives of such a high level as follows:

- to take stock of implementation towards sustainable development (including an assessment of the JPOI targets)
- to assess whether we are on the right track in the way that we are implementing our sustainable development targets
- to consider how to use the opportunity that is borne from multiple global crises to redirect the way we are doing business
- to ensure a strengthened and continuing global sustainable development regime that is robust and has more impact than is currently the case
- the development of a shared vision on the "Global Sustainable Development regime and priorities"
- Renewed political commitment towards the implementation of sustainable development

The objectives of such a high level segment should be:

- 1. Stock taking on implementation: to assess progress in implementation:**
 - on Agenda 21
 - on the targets of the JPOI, and specifically of the cycles of CSD that have been achieved (water, sanitation, human settlements, energy, industrial development, climate change, land, agriculture, rural development, drought and desertification)
- 2. Relook at how best to achieve Sustainable Development in the current global context**
 - focus on repositioning the sustainable development debate, in the context of multiple crises
 - focus on technology for sustainable development and sustainable consumption and production
- 3. Stock taking on process:**
 - are we using the CSD sessions effectively;

- is it necessary to refine the way that we are interpreting and implementing the decisions that Parties took at CSD 11, on the organization of the work of the CSD

There have been 3 review sessions and 3 policy sessions: During these sessions the CSD has:

- Provided a useful review of regional and national progress with implementation of targets
- Provided a useful platform for sharing of lessons learned and good practice
- Provided some policy direction on the implementation of sustainable development at global, regional and national levels

However, it would also be fair to consider some of the challenges:

- There is a limited assessment of challenges at regional and international level
- There is a limited and general focus on means of implementation
- There is limited focus on institutional arrangements for international Sustainable Development governance
- There is an adhoc approach to longer term monitoring of progress with JPOI targets that have already been reviewed in previous cycles (e.g. water, sanitation, human settlements, energy)
- There is a tendency towards de-linkage of JPOI and MDG targets
- Most importantly, there seems to be a tendency to re-inforce, in a NON integrated way, the positions that are being taken in other international forums, on economic, social and environmental issues. This means that in the CSD, there is the risk that we are DIS-INTEGRATING, and not INTEGRATING the economic, social and environmental pillars. This means, that potentially, the CSD is a follower and NOT a leader on sustainable development