



Intervention by the  
Government of Bermuda

Cross Cutting Issues in relation to Sustainable Development

Delivered 13 April 2005

**Madame Vice Chair**, on behalf of the Government of Bermuda, I would like to express our appreciation to the UK Government, which is responsible for Bermuda's international representation, for affording us the opportunity to speak in this debate on the cross-cutting issues relevant to water, sanitation and human settlements.

Bermuda's presence here today is unprecedented. We are honoured to join hands with our global brothers and sisters to address issues that bind us together regardless of our locale.

Bermuda is less than 21 sq. miles in size and is located in the Atlantic Ocean some 600 miles away from North America. In many ways sustainable best practices have existed for centuries within our small isolated enclave of civilization with regard to human settlement, sanitation and water.

For example, Bermuda an active land use and planning system that carefully allocates specific uses to defined areas.

Sanitation, developed centuries earlier, is achieved through underground cesspits which utilize the natural filtration of the Island's limestone sub-strata.

The Island's traditional architecture means most residential buildings collect their own rainwater from white lime washed roofs, which purifies and then stores that water for individual use in underground water tanks.

But today, Bermuda is densely populated. Open space is under pressure from urbanization. Historically, every Bermudian aspired to own a "piece of the rock", as we would say, but this is becoming more and more difficult; changes in technology and living standards mean that we consume more and more water – and climate change may mean that we collect less rainfall.

So while, as I mentioned, we have in the past adopted sustainable practices by necessity, our economic success and social changes are contributing to unsustainable trends.

This brings me to cross-cutting issue number 1 - capacity building. We have gained significantly from the expertise gathered here, and take many lessons home with us. We welcome efforts to break out of the cycle of solely negotiating texts into the business of learning from others and sharing knowledge.

The second issue is consultation, and with it, partnership. Bermudians now need to join together and develop a collective vision for the future. Governments do not have the monopoly on vision or on the skills needed for delivery. To this end, the Island is about to engage in a national debate on the issues that face us today.

This debate will form the basis of Bermuda's Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan. That is the third, and possibly paramount, cross-cutting issue that Bermuda would like to highlight. Actions on water, sanitation and human settlements must be brought together into a coherent whole, with actions across the board which are mutually reinforcing. We waste our time if our economic policies undermine our environmental and social policies, and vice versa.

We are working to meet the Johannesburg target in order to have a comprehensive strategy in place in 2005.

Finally, proclamations are worthless without action. Again, this was a theme of Johannesburg. Hence the Government of Bermuda has committed to the establishment of a Sustainable Development Unit, the formation of indicators, the publication of an annual progress report, and Sustainability Impact Assessment for assessing all future policies.

Bermuda is not alone in dealing with these issues. We offer these cross-cutting issues for the Commission's consideration. And we invite the rest of the world to support our national discussion on sustainable development and our efforts in creating and implementing our first National Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan.

Thank You.