

Notes for Remarks by

**The Honourable Peter Kent, P.C., M.P.,
Minister of the Environment,**

Canada's Country Statement for the Rio+20 - United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

**Rio de Janeiro, Brazil
June 22, 2012**

I want to begin my remarks today by thanking Brazil for their gracious hospitality, and the warm and friendly team of volunteers. I would like to pay special tribute to Minister Patriota, whose capable guidance and leadership brought this massive conference to a successful consensus.

Canada is pleased to participate at this United Nations conference on sustainable development. It is part of an important international conversation which we've been engaged in since the first Rio summit was convened 20 years ago.

While there is much to celebrate 20 years after the original Rio conference... in terms of increased public and political awareness of... and engagement in... all dimensions of environmental sustainability... we are also well aware of the many challenges yet to be met... and mastered.

In some respects, past is prologue.

Canada welcomes the opportunity to advance and refine a meaningful, multilateral dialogue on these existing and emerging issues. We are committed to pursuing practical, concrete results that realistically reflect the unique circumstances of each country at the table -- as well as the everyday needs and priorities of their citizens.

Among the most relevant of these national circumstances are geography, economy and climate. And we believe the best way to proceed is to agree on global targets that allow Member States to achieve their own ideal balance of economic growth, social and environmental protection.

When the first Rio summit was convened in 1992, the world economy was in recession. Twenty years later, we are grappling with another downturn.

That makes it all the more urgent for us to focus on improving the efficiency of our collective efforts, to better integrate sustainable development strategies within the United Nations framework and to reduce duplication and streamline existing mechanisms. In short, we must apply the mandate of sustainability to our approach as well as our intended outcome.

These elements have shaped Canada's consistent progress toward a stronger, greener economy -- an objective that we have integrated into a broad range of government actions and strategies.

We have put into place domestic initiatives to combat air pollution and climate change, to control harmful chemicals, and to protect our nation's water and biodiversity. Our recent actions include developing and implementing sector by sector green house gas regulations, augmenting oil sands monitoring, and significantly increasing the protected areas in Canada.

Canada's achievements are the result of a team effort. Our provinces have set ambitious climate change targets with a view on market-based mechanisms, air pollution regulations, and measures to protect water, land and biodiversity, such as Quebec's Plan Nord, described as the largest conservation project in history.

Our private sector and non-government organizations continue to work together to create new and practical solutions that support environmental sustainability and economic growth. A good example of this is Canada's Green Mining Initiative.

Canada is pleased to see the progress achieved regarding the reaffirmation of the human right to safe drinking water and basic sanitation as essential for the full enjoyment of life. Canada's understanding is that this right is an essential component of the right to an adequate standard of living under Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. It is also Canada's understanding that this right is to be progressively realized and does not encompass transboundary water issues including bulk water trade, nor any mandatory allocation of international development assistance.

We look forward to meeting the challenges and benchmarking new levels of success based on the outcome of this conference.

Thank you