



**EUROPEAN COMMISSION**

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President of the European Commission

**Speech by President Barroso at the opening session of  
the Rio+20 conference**

*Check Against Delivery*  
*Seul le texte prononcé fait foi*  
*Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Earth Summit – Rio +20  
**Rio, 20 June 2012**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Permitam-me que comece com uma palavra de sincero agradecimento ao Brasil, país-anfitrião desta Cimeira, não só por nos receber nesta "cidade maravilhosa" que é o Rio de Janeiro, mas também por todo o seu empenhamento a favor da causa do desenvolvimento sustentável.

Quero também agradecer às Nações Unidas, e especialmente ao Secretário-Geral, por todos os esforços desenvolvidos para o êxito do Rio+20.

As many others in this room, I remember vividly that twenty years ago, the then 12-year-old Severn Suzuki addressed the plenary session at the Earth Summit here in Rio.

Twenty years ago this 12-year-old girl coming from Canada and speaking on behalf of the Environmental Children's Organisation (ECO) and "for all generations to come", as she put it, "silenced the world for 6 minutes".

She concluded her speech by telling delegates: "I challenge you please make your actions reflect your words."

Twenty years later progress towards sustainable development has been achieved in a number of areas and in many regions.

But still considerable challenges remain in eradicating poverty and in fully integrating the economic social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development.

Many environmental challenges have become even more acute. Increasing demand for resources has led to growing resource depletion while climate change, biodiversity loss and deforestation continue at an alarming rate.

At the same time, despite all the progress made, several of the Millennium Development Goals are off-track, notably hunger eradication.

One sixth of the world's population is undernourished. And Sub-Saharan Africa with more than one in four of its 856 million people undernourished remains the most food-insecure region.

Twenty years ago I was here in Rio as Portuguese State Secretary for Foreign Affairs. At that time, Severn Suzuki said "I'm only a child yet I know we are all in this together and should act as one single world towards one single goal."

Twenty years later I am here again, this time as President of the European Commission to express Europe's unwavering commitment to sustainable development, to the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, and to deliver with all of you a clear message on a common vision and an agenda for change.

We must indeed work together to address these problems and move towards sustainable development.

In a world where the population is expected to rise up to nine billion by 2050, sustainability is also about intergenerational solidarity and responsibility.

It is about changing the way we consume and produce today to adapt our economies to the boundaries of our planet and allow future generations to meet their own needs tomorrow.

For the European Union, this is what green economy is all about.

We believe that promoting the right kind of growth, that is inclusive and environmentally friendly, is the most effective pathway to achieve sustainable development.

For this reason, I warmly welcome that the Conference has acknowledged that the Green Economy will enhance our ability to manage natural resources sustainably and with lower environmental impacts and increased resource efficiency. This is an important first step in the right direction.

Obviously this will be done differently in each country. We may all have different capacities and focus areas. But we share a common objective, a common vision to progress towards more sustainable development.

This means to promote an economy that respects the boundaries of our planet, creates decent work and green jobs, fosters social cohesion, tackles poverty and enhances food security.

An economy based on an efficient management of resources and natural capital and which taps into the full ecological and social innovation potential.

This includes, among others, the sustainable management of water, arable land, healthy and productive oceans and seas, biodiversity, as well as the provision of sustainable energy for all, improved resource efficiency and in particular, management of waste.

These areas underpin millions of livelihoods and can help alleviate poverty. They could become areas for future economic growth and global markets.

That is why the European Union focussed on developing clear and concrete global commitments on five priority areas: sustainable energy, water, sustainable land management and ecosystems, oceans, and resource efficiency, in particular waste.

Experience shows that we get better results when we agree on specific and quantifiable goals. And I am happy that the EU's efforts to make the outcome document more action-oriented has attracted increased support and is now better reflected in the outcome document.

We believe that the five priority areas I just mentioned are also key themes for the Sustainable Development Goals. All of them have a prominent place in the outcome document. We therefore very much welcome that the conference has agreed that we will be guided by this document when defining the future SDGs.

We consider that Sustainable Development Goals should be in full complementarity with the Millennium Development Goals, and strengthen the global commitment towards their achievement. The European Union wants a post-2015 overarching framework with specific goals that address the three dimensions of sustainable development - environmental, economic and social- in a holistic and coherent manner.

But to have a common objective is not enough. We also have to decide on the best ways to get there. And in this regard, Rio+20 is the occasion to better mobilise and focus the resources - national and international; public and private - necessary to meet our priorities.

And allow me to stress here three aspects on which we should focus our efforts to deliver concrete results.

First and foremost, each and every country must take the necessary measures to put in place an enabling environment of domestic policies that is designed to be self-sustaining.

As regards developing countries, Official Development Assistance (ODA) will continue to represent a significant resource for sustainable development. The European Union and its members will remain the world's largest donor, with a significant share of our aid around the globe already going to "Rio-priorities".

We remain staunchly committed to reaching our collective objective of 0.7% of Gross National Income (GNI) on aid by 2015, and we will mainstream sustainability considerations into our cooperation programs and all other EU policies even more in the future.

For 2012-2013 alone, our EU aid to all three dimensions of sustainable development already amounts to almost 8 billion Euro – more than 10 billion US Dollars.

And on the front of sustainable energy, I will propose to mobilise 400 million Euro over the next two years to support concrete new investments in this key area. In this regard, we very much welcome the Secretary General's initiative to ensure Sustainable Energy for All.

Secondly, progress towards sustainable development entails providing the right financing instruments. ODA alone is not the answer. Public and private funding and business expertise should go hand in hand in establishing appropriate financing strategies. Innovative sources of financing should be encouraged. And emerging economies should take a stronger role, proportionate to their evolving international status.

Thirdly, to move towards more sustainable development also depends on skills, know-how and technology diffusion. And in this regard the European Union is proud that its research framework programmes are open to all countries, including support to researchers in developing countries.

We are convinced that democracy, human rights, rule of law, good governance, and gender equality and empowerment of women are indispensable for achieving sustainable development. We therefore welcome that these values are firmly anchored in the outcome document of this conference.

We recognize the fundamental role of civil society and other stakeholders in the realization of sustainable development and we will work to increase their participation in decision making processes.

Finally, as no time can be lost to move towards a greener and more sustainable economy and to eradicate poverty, better and more efficient global governance is strongly needed.

I am therefore happy with our agreement to strengthen sustainable development governance within the UN. We are satisfied that the new High Level Forum for Sustainable Development will build on the inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development. We are confident that the new forum will secure the regular participation of Heads of State in reviewing progress of all our commitments.

And I also welcome the agreement to reinforce the international environmental governance by strengthening and upgrading UNEP. It will now have universal membership and must become our common home to set the global environmental agenda. With this in mind, we will continue to work, together with our partners,

for the creation a full fledged United Nations Environment Organization. We believe that the people of the world need it.

Mister/Madam President, Excellencies,

We share the same planet. We face the same challenges. We share a common responsibility towards the future generations.

None of us has achieved in full what was wanted initially. But we have all worked together to develop common ground. Let me reassure you that the EU will continue to strive for more ambitious actions that our planet and its people require.

We need now to press ahead with the implementation of what has been achieved with a greater sense of urgency because the planet and the poorest in the world cannot afford delays.

Today Severn Suzuki is not a child anymore. She is a young mother of 32 years old, worried as all mothers with the future of their children. This is what sustainable development is about: to make sure that our actions not only do not thwart our children's dreams, but rather enable future generations to live a better life.

We have shown in the past that we have the will to change the course of our destiny for the better. Time has come now to close the gap between this ambition and resolute action to make it happen.

I thank you for your attention.