



The spoken word is final!

## Rio+20

Speech of Federal Councillor Doris Leuthard at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio +20", Rio de Janeiro, 21 June 2012

---

Excellencies,  
Secretary-General,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have come together here in Rio to deliberate nothing less than the future we want and the future we need. The motto of this conference reflects the fact that everything we do, and everything we fail to do, will have consequences for the future. A society lives sustainably when it creates solid foundations for future generations.

Since Stockholm and Rio 92 we have made substantial progress in many areas. Yet, we still have a long way to go before sustainable development in its three dimensions becomes a reality.

One thing we have to improve, is to involve non-governmental partners more effectively. All stakeholders must be part of the solution. I see this conference as an opportunity for greater involvement on the part of business and industry. Many business leaders and researchers have already demonstrated that they are aware of their responsibilities through their involvement in the Global Compact, for example. Other leaders are inspiring us by developing innovative technological solutions that will help us to meet the needs of future generations in a sustainable manner.

We can reduce fossil energy. We can produce food, more food, while preserving the quality of our ground. We have technologies which help us to reduce pollution in our cities to improve the health of our children. If we manage to build upon such efforts we will be able to generate real change. Since 1992, the Swiss government has adopted four sustainability strategies. Focus areas were identified and concrete measures proposed for advancing the implementation of sustainable development. Also on the regional level, many strategies have been adopted. In 1999, my country



also anchored sustainable development in its constitution. Our experience has shown that sustainable development requires considerable investment, not only in terms of government policy, but also in terms of coordination instruments and institutions.

We also need effective and efficient international institutions. Both the Commission on Sustainable Development CSD and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) need to be reformed. Switzerland welcomes to replace the CSD with a high level forum on sustainable development. We also welcome the decision to strengthen UNEP through concrete measures such as universal membership of the UNEP Governing Council and developing an environmental strategy for the UN system. It will be decisive to constructively and efficiently work together in making these decisions operational.

Switzerland welcomes the fact that this conference has brought the Green Economy to the global political agenda. Resource efficiency is a key element of all our policies in the upcoming years. To green the Economy is an important process to support growth, to fight poverty by sustainable methods and ways. I am confident that we will use the outcome of this conference as a starting point for accelerating the transformation towards a Green Economy with new, decent jobs

Last but not least, we very much welcome the commitment to establishing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We have provided the main elements of the SDGs. It will be important to give clear guidance on the process for their detailed elaboration. SDGs will not only provide common orientation; they will also help us to make sustainable development relevant, practical and inspiring for all.

The outcome of this conference reflects many of these issues. However, it is clear that this is not sufficient. These small, however important steps are not enough to ensure the future that we want and that we need. We, the world leaders, the international community, each state, each actor, and each individual have to be more ambitious than the document on which we will agree.

With the growing population and the needs of our societies we have to act. In this regard I would have welcomed not only the important role of women in advancing sustainable development but also an explicit recognition of women's full enjoyment of reproductive rights.



We all know that a lot of measures that should be implemented are not very popular, or create conflict of interests. I therefore call upon the big, powerful countries: we need you! We – as small countries – can not make alone a significant difference. As long as you stay apart, or vague in your commitments, others will not act. We need common action to reach the balance and to fight new inequalities. All of us have to contribute to the future we want and the future we need.