



**Preparation and implementation of
the World Summit on Sustainable
Development: Role of the
Regional Commissions**

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LC/R.2097
July 2002

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FOREWORD

As sustainable development embraces dynamic processes of transformation in the social, economic and environmental domains, it is essential that efforts are coordinated at global, regional, national and local levels. Developments at the global level can have profound effects on local ecosystems and communities while collective local actions can steer the global community towards the path of a sustainable future. Consequently, regional institutions such as the UN regional commissions are committed and well positioned to promote sustainable development amidst these dynamic and interlinked processes and to articulate local and national priorities consistent with regional and global realities.

To this effect, governments have recognised the role of regional commissions and have expressed their confidence in their ability to effectively implement the outcome of WSSD. It has been recognised as well that cooperation among countries can most effectively be promoted at the regional and subregional levels in responding to complex global issues, especially in the context of the specificities therein.

We look forward to cooperating with other regional and international institutions, in undertaking responsibilities assigned to us to implement the outcomes of WSSD at the regional level. The comparative advantage of the regional commissions in meeting these responsibilities is founded on their accumulated experience, multifaceted analytical work, effective provision of technical assistance, and their capabilities to assist governments in developing regional and subregional perspectives and consensus on global issues. Further, their multisectoral expertise and inter-disciplinary nature of work coupled with their convening power as a neutral, universal forum for policy dialogue and exchange of experience places them at a vantage point to manage and coordinate regional and subregional efforts to make development truly sustainable.

The regional commissions have successfully developed partnerships focusing on initiatives, which have strong subregional, regional and interregional dimensions. Through such multisectoral and multistakeholder partnerships, they are effectively involved in efforts towards alleviating poverty, reducing social and economic inequities and promoting sound management of natural resources and the environment. The regional commissions are well positioned to promote new initiatives leading to robust and lasting partnerships with various stakeholders and major groups including relevant United Nations bodies and agencies, international and

regional organizations, private sector, scientific community, parliament and organizations of civil society.

The post-summit agenda will essentially be a call for action – a call for the translation of WSSD outcomes into concrete initiatives, projects and activities. It is of course a challenge for all of us. The regional commissions on their part are ready to lead the way towards effective actions at the regional level.

Through this document, we would like to reiterate the regional commissions commitment to meet the challenges of implementation of the outcomes of WSSD. In this endeavour, we look forward to the full support of the international community and to working closely with the governments, the UN family and all stakeholders.

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I. THE ROAD TO JOHANNESBURG

1. One of the main challenges of Johannesburg will be how the criteria of economic, environmental and social sustainability can be made operative in the different spheres of public policy in an integrated and balanced manner. It is important to acknowledge that for effective implementation of the sustainable development agenda, there is a need to adopt a common yet differentiated approach, which can best be achieved at the regional level.
2. The road to and from Johannesburg offers a unique opportunity to renew the respective regions own agendas for sustainable development, based on each region's unique characteristics, while also offering the possibility to refine and consolidate the global agenda through a bottom-up approach. The starting point of the "regional agendas" is undoubtedly the regional platforms and initiatives, which with the endorsement of respective stakeholders at the preparatory phase of the Johannesburg Summit have already outlined some concrete initiatives for implementation.¹
3. This document, prepared jointly by the five United Nations regional commissions, has the objective of putting in perspective the tasks ahead for implementing regional processes to better identify the comparative advantages of each region that can contribute to the solution of global environmental problems in an equitable way.
4. The document further demonstrates that the regional level can provide an adequate platform to build common positions, exchange experiences among "peer" countries and undertake periodic regional reviews of sustainability encompassing economic growth, social equity and environmental integrity. This approach should also have the objective of advancing cooperation among countries, organizations and agencies of the United Nations system, and other relevant regional organizations, including the regional development banks. This should enable identification, in a coherent manner, of innovative means to cope with the new and different imperatives for global governance for sustainable development and, hence for international cooperation.

¹ For details, please see the reports of the regional preparatory meetings for WSSD, referred to above. Also available at their respective websites.

A. Regional Perspectives and Integrated Approaches to Sustainable Development

5. The past decade began with major changes in the international agenda. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) was the first in a series of world conferences held to address the multi-dimensional problems of environment and development and their complex interactions.

6. UNCED marked the transition towards a new international environmental order, represented by a new generation of environmental conventions and the formulation of Agenda 21, as a comprehensive programme of action to guide the endeavours of the world for sustainable development. New global ethical principles and concepts were developed with the main objective of establishing a more equitable basis for international cooperation.

7. However the centrepiece of success will be to ensure full coherence between economic, social and environmental policies at both the macro and micro levels. To attain this, it is crucial to change such perceptions as environmental policies can become discriminatory measures of free trade and can entail additional costs in the production chains.

8. Consequently, if the principles of sustainable development are to be genuinely applied as the culmination of the movement towards a new development paradigm, major structural and institutional changes will be required, and numerous issues and dilemmas will have to be dealt with, some of them global in nature, others clearly linked to regional realities. Therefore while a number of sustainable development issues must be addressed at the global level, it is essential to acknowledge that effective implementation calls for a differentiated approach, which can be best achieved at the regional level.

9. Development models vary across regions. Geographic location is important because it is associated with shared historical and contemporary experiences. Groups of countries sharing a geographic space are being exposed to globalizing influences through a regional prism that refracts the international forces in various ways so as to skew the advantages and disadvantages that the new global context is providing. The crucial question is how the similarity of concepts utilized to describe globalization and the forces it entails are masking important differences. Further, it is important to consider how these differences will play out over the coming years as opportunities or risks for the different regions.

10. One lesson learned that resulted from the last decade is that the variation of problems and policy responses within regions is less than that between regions. In this regard, the bottom-up approach followed in the regional preparations proved to be quite effective and inclusive, by bringing together all stakeholders from the local level up to the national, subregional and regional levels². While these regional platforms reflect the peculiarities and priorities of each region, there are strong commonalities across the regions. The regional dimension will be at the cutting edge of implementation as a follow-up to WSSD.

11. Five components will be key to the success of Johannesburg:

- Ensure effective implementation and its monitoring at the regional and national levels;
- Clarify global-regional linkages to ensure mutually reinforcing follow-up processes;
- Integrate the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental in institutional, policy, financial and implementation terms;
- Strengthen intra and inter-regional cooperation;
- Open the intergovernmental decision-making processes to multi-stakeholder participation beyond consultation.

12. Clarity on the economic obstacles that have impeded full realization of the UNCED agreements need careful analysis. Globalization and its effects are a relevant part of the equation but not the only one. It is fair to say that the main effect of globalization has been the changing role of national governments, the increasing importance of transnational actors (corporations, NGOs, etc.) and the new forms of regional and subregional political and economic integration.

13. It is also important to understand and assess the effects of the economic reforms that preceded globalization, including its relationship to environment. It is clear that the world is studying options to reform the international financial architecture and find innovative ways of making it more viable for development by reducing the vulnerability of

² Joint Statement of the Five UN regional commissions (ECE, ECLAC, ECA, ESCAP and ESCWA) to the II Session of the Preparatory Committee to WSSD, New York, 1 February 2002; delivered by ESCAP on behalf of the UN regional commissions.

developing countries in the economic and social arenas. The Monterrey Conference addressed many of these issues including global financial governance, which will provide a framework of the real options for sustainable development.

14. There is general agreement that Agenda 21 and the multilateral environmental conventions are still valid and should remain as the blueprint for sustainable development. The crucial challenge of Johannesburg is to design innovative institutional and financial mechanisms to ensure their effective implementation and monitoring.

15. Examples such as the Mesoamerican Biological Corridor strategy, the Environment for Europe Process, the ASEAN Environmental Strategy, the Program of Action for Small Island Developing States indicate that strengthening regional and subregional cooperation is an essential element of the implementation of programmes on sustainable development. Regional and subregional settings can better ensure coherence of the global environmental agenda to ably connect the national realities with regional and global priorities. Strong regional commissions can become instrumental in the integration of economic and social policies with environment, due to their convening power for inter-sectoral policy dialogue at the regional level. Regional commissions are also well positioned to produce analytical work on the economic implications of environmental policies and measures, information that will be crucial in linking energy, water management, trade, transport, industry and the environment.

16. Their history and the evolution of their mandates demonstrate that the regional commissions' involvement in sustainable development issues was not accidental. They have been, among other United Nations agencies and programmes, the first to analyze and assess the three pillars of sustainable development with an integrated approach. The regional commissions were established by the General Assembly in the framework of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) with clear mandates to assess development issues and trends linking regional and global perspectives.

17. Following UNCED the regional commissions played a pivotal role through their studies, analyses and technical assistance, highlighting that the specific characteristics of each region should be considered not only within the context of the Agenda 21 but also in the negotiation and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.

18. Particularly, the regional commissions were called to play a leading role in coordinating regional and sub–regional activities by sectoral and other United Nations bodies and shall assist countries in achieving sustainable development³.

19. The Report of the Secretary General to Prep Com II in paragraph 238, envisages inter alia “...the fuller utilization of the regional commissions to promote regional sustainable development strategies and review regional and national implementation of the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development”.

20. In light of the above, the regional commissions, being multisectoral organizations, recognize that they would be called upon to play an important role in meeting this challenge. Regarding Johannesburg Summit follow –up, the regional commissions, on receipt of a clear mandate, would be able to further reinforce this integrated approach. In more specific terms, they would further strengthen their analytical capabilities, their role as a forum for policy dialogue and exchange of experiences as well as their technical assistance programmes and activities.

³ 1993, “Agenda 21, Programme of Action of the United Nations from Rio”, ISBN: 92-1-100509-4, Sales no. S.93.I.11, New York, Chapter 38, paragraph 30.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTCOME OF WSSD: ROLE OF THE REGIONAL COMMISSIONS

21. The vision from the regions envisages collective future action. A dynamic equilibrium between economic growth, social equity and ecological integrity is seen vital for sustainable development in the future. The regions aspire to reach an optimum level of interaction between the economic, social and ecological systems and hope to see this happen at all levels – national, regional and global. Accordingly, it is imperative to set the future agenda for the effective and timely implementation of concrete measures to promote economic growth and social development while protecting the environment. In this regard, the regional commissions are considered to play a strategic and vital role.

A. Integrated follow up and implementation of the WSSD outcome at the regional level

22. Building upon their already existing analytical capacity in the economic, social and environmental fields, the regional commissions can strengthen the implementation of the outcome of WSSD and help integrate it further into policy issues. There is general agreement that effective governance is of fundamental importance in sustainable development. Institutional and policy failures have been identified as among the main causes of environmental degradation, persistent poverty and social inequity. It has been recognized that a coherent, consistent and transparent decision-making process is essential for integrating the economic, social and environmental pillars of sustainable development. Institutional arrangements for sustainable development must provide for effective policy formulation, coordination, implementation and monitoring. Because of their strategic location and multidisciplinary character, the regional commissions are well placed to manage the dynamic interactions in the social, economic and ecological spheres, in a complimentary relationship. They can provide greater coherence and better coordination between the country-level, subregional, regional and global actions in the implementation of the agenda for sustainable development.

23. In this regard, high on the post-Johannesburg agenda should be the strengthening of the capacity of the regional commissions to support sustainable development by making it a key element of their mandates. A mechanism should be created within the regional commissions to

enhance their capacities to implement, coordinate and monitor Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg agreements and to review sustainable development reports for the purpose of making substantive recommendations to governments and relevant regional and international organizations. Therefore, such a mechanism would have a twofold role: ensuring the monitoring of progress made by member countries of the regional commissions, and, on this basis, promoting regional policy dialogues and peer reviews.

1. Monitoring of Progress

24. Such monitoring would lead to assessing progress made in countries and/or groups of countries of the region. It would build upon the existing analytical capacity of the regional commissions as follows:

- statistical work with member States
- work on the application of sustainable development indicators developed by the United Nations at the global level;
- analyzing economic, social and environmental developments in the region based on their close relationships with governmental and intergovernmental entities, NGOs and academic circles.

The outcome of this monitoring work by the regional commissions would assist regional policy dialogue and, in turn, would be transmitted to the relevant UN global bodies, in particular CSD and ECOSOC contributing to global reviews.

2. Regional Policy Dialogue and Peer Reviews

25. Based on the monitoring, the regional commissions will be able to strengthen policy dialogue and facilitate exchange of experiences on sustainability policy issues in their principal and subsidiary intergovernmental bodies and processes. Furthermore, they will be in a position to facilitate the sharing of national and subregional reviews on the implementation of the WSSD outcome. In cooperation with United Nations agencies and the regional development banks, the regional commissions should take the lead in convening regional meetings to review and report on the implementation of the outcome of WSSD.

B. Selected Major Issues for Implementation

1. Implementation of MEAs

26 Unless the commitments made at UNCED are met and, more important, the Rio principle of common but differentiated responsibilities is followed in its letter and spirit, Agenda 21 cannot be successfully implemented. It is therefore important that, in the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements, industrialized countries must be prepared to accept greater commitments than developing countries and costs are distributed in accordance with the countries' financial and technical capabilities. In addition, there must be equitable trade and investment regimes, based on respect for comparative advantage, effective and just application of intellectual property rights and technology transfer on favourable terms, particularly in relation to tropical agriculture and medicine. The continued development of national policies is also key to achieve these goals. The regional commissions are strategically placed and have the requisite expertise to assist in these endeavours through training and capacity building.

2. Meeting Environmental Regulations for Trade and Green Accounting

27. The regional commissions could also assist countries in harnessing "environmentally sensitive markets" with higher demands for quality and the management of products and processes, and the consequent need for adjustments to the environmental requirements of their main export markets. The way these adjustments will be achieved depends to a large extent on the type of technological and environmental management that prevails in the developed countries, since they dominate world trade and are the ones laying down the standards that have to be complied with internationally. There are growing fears in many developing countries that the environmental dimension may give rise to new "conditionalities" and non-tariff barriers. Therefore, there is an increasing need for capacity building so that countries can address effectively complex trade and environment issues and optimise the benefits from trade liberalization. The regional commissions could help strengthen the capacity of developing countries and countries in transition in coping with the international competitive effects of environmental regulations, the market access implications of environment-related standards and regulations, and the effects of trade on the environment and natural resources.

28. In cooperation with national authorities, regional commissions could also support the development of better information on the potential impacts of foreign private flows upon sustainability. Further, they could assist national governments with the development and implementation of “green” accounting methods, which provide essential information on the degree to which public and private investments offset the depletion and degradation of natural resources and enhance human capital. In fact, the regional commissions are already promoting and implementing programmes in these directions.

3. Financing for Sustainable Development

29. The regional commissions, in cooperation with the regional development banks, the World Bank, UNEP, UNDP, and other relevant institutions, could work for the establishment of regional financing mechanisms or sustainable development funds, which could be interlinked with the GEF and other innovative public-private partnerships. The regional commissions, in cooperation with the regional and subregional development banks and UNDP, would take the lead in organizing regional meetings of financial institutions and donors as a follow-up to the Monterrey International Conference on Financing for Development, and initiate studies on establishing innovative financial mechanisms through, among others, the adoption of appropriate economic instruments.

C. Promotion of Inter-Regional and Subregional Cooperation

30. A number of issues common to all the regions were identified in the regional preparatory processes. It was recognized that unsustainable development trends in the regions were generally attributable mainly to poverty, negative impacts of globalization, heavy debt burden and a lack of mechanisms for the participation of stakeholders, including civil society. The involvement of stakeholders, particularly NGOs and women, in the decision-making process was considered imperative in formulating and implementing policies. Illiteracy, poor health and the prevalence of diseases, air pollution, climate change, deforestations, land degradation and desertification, loss of biodiversity, water pollution, energy, the management of oceans, freshwater and natural disasters were identified as among the main priority issues or areas of concern in the regions.

31. Many of these common issues underscore the need for inter-regional cooperation and coordination. While assessing regional progress in

implementation, the regional commissions are committed to promote cooperation and understanding as well as exchange of experiences on sustainable development within the region. In this connection, their role is vital in providing the regional coordinating mechanism that would embrace a variety of institutions including United Nations bodies and specialized agencies, intergovernmental organizations, subregional organizations as well as regional financial and technical assistance institutions that have a stake in sustainable development.

32. The development and implementation of a mechanism to promote more robust interregional cooperation among and between the regional commissions should also be in the regional agenda. This would be accomplished through, inter-alia, joint programmes and activities, between two or more regional commissions, as well as through regular exchange of information. Regular policy dialogues on sustainable development and related topics would be organized with the participation of representatives from two or more regional commissions. An active exchange of experiences and joint programmes on poverty reduction and managing globalisation could serve as a starting point for strengthening partnership and cooperation among the regional commissions.

33. The issue of sustainable development at the interregional level may involve the joint management of regional natural ecosystems (e.g. international river basins, shared water bodies, regional seas transboundary movement of hazardous wastes). In some instances interregional collaboration may be necessary for more efficient management, e.g. in the case of regional climate studies, while in others it would be needed to promote cost-effectiveness and to avoid unnecessary duplication of effort.

D. Partnerships, Initiatives and Capacity Building

34. The regional commissions have developed partnership initiatives focusing on those, which have a strong subregional, regional or interregional dimension. They could also maintain the momentum after the Summit, by promoting new partnership initiatives. Through multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships, the regional commissions have already fostered the process for raising the resources and expertise needed to reduce poverty, promote social integration and the sustainable use of natural resources for future generations. They stand well poised to further develop such partnerships through their extensive experience in developing networks in various fields. They are prepared to take the lead in the development in the

region of robust and lasting partnerships with various stakeholders and major groups such as international organizations, national councils for sustainable development, non-governmental and civil society organizations, private sector and professional associations and trade unions.

35. The Regional Platforms for Sustainable Development have provided regional assessments of the implementation of Agenda 21, outlined the key policy issues, identified the priorities and described the needed follow-up actions. They reflect the views and concerns not only of governments, but also of civil society organizations and other stakeholders in sustainable development. An important item of the post-Johannesburg agenda would be the translation of these Regional Platforms into concrete action plans and programmes and regional initiatives for sustainable development. The regional commissions would develop these programmes and initiatives into detailed projects and activities for funding and immediate implementation. Among these initiatives, of highest priority would be a comprehensive regional programme on capacity building for sustainable development. In cooperation with relevant United Nations bodies, international and regional organizations, relevant civil society organizations and the private sector, regional commissions would develop this programme, building on existing activities and linking it up closely with all the other regional initiatives on sustainable development.

36. After Johannesburg, the regional institutional mechanism must be proactive and further strengthened. The regional commissions are equipped to play a central role in regional sustainable development efforts, and provide the essential link with similar and complementary efforts at the national and global levels. The future agenda after Johannesburg is essentially a call to action. It is a call for the development and implementation of the Regional Platforms into concrete projects and activities. It is a challenge to the regional commissions to lead the way towards effective and transparent governance at the regional level. When this agenda is implemented, the regions could look forward to a quality of life that is socially desirable, economically viable and ecologically sustainable. And this would mean the realization of a shared vision.

ANNEX

I. REGIONAL PROCESS TOWARDS WSSD

1. The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development acting as the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, at its organizational session held from 30 April to 2 May 2001, agreed that regional preparations for the summit would formulate regional platforms to provide a regional assessment of the implementation of Agenda 21, outline key policy issues, priorities and follow up actions, provide substantial inputs to the preparatory process for the World Summit. The task for organizing regional meetings was undertaken by regional commissions as lead agencies and five regional meetings were organized in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and Caribbean, and Western Asia.

A. Highlights of the Regional Meetings for the World Summit on Sustainable Development

2. The aims of the regional meetings were:
- To conduct regional assessment of progress in the implementation of Agenda 21;
 - Provide an opportunity for interaction between major groups and stakeholders;
 - Share experiences and provide an opportunity to better prepare and understand the concerns and positions of the countries involved;
 - Prepare regional platforms outlining key policy issues, priorities and follow-up actions based on regional assessments.
3. A summary of dates and places where they were held, their structure and outcome is provided in Table 1.

B. Regional Review and Assessments: Issues and Priorities

4. It was recognized that unsustainable development trends in the regions were generally attributable mainly to poverty, negative impacts of globalization, heavy debt burden and a lack of mechanisms for the participation of stakeholders, including civil society. In order to alleviate poverty, measures were needed to be undertaken to promote income-generating micro enterprises, strengthen micro financing mechanisms by creating stronger ties with small-scale enterprises, enhance the role of the

Table 1
REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETINGS

Africa	Asia-Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and Caribbean	Western Asia
<p>Nairobi, Kenya 15-18 October 2001</p> <p>• Structure</p> <p>During the four-day Conference, delegates met in a two-day Technical Segment on 15-16 October, and a two-day Ministerial Segment held on Wednesday and Thursday, 17-18 October.</p> <p>• Outcome</p> <p>Delegates negotiated an African Ministerial Statement drawing on Assessment Report and the outcomes of subregional preparatory meetings. The African Ministerial Statement was adopted which identifies the achievements and constraints faced in</p>	<p>Phnom Penh, Cambodia 27-29 November 2001</p> <p>• Structure</p> <p>The Asia-Pacific Roundtable on Sustainable Development and the High-Level Asia-Pacific Regional Meeting for the WSSD took place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from 27-29 November 2001, organized in cooperation with UNEP, UNDP and ADB. The Roundtable and Regional Meeting were attended by over 190 representatives from 46 Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) States, two associate members of ESCAP, four non-ESCAP UN member States, and over 220 representatives from UN</p>	<p>Geneva, Switzerland 24-25 September 2001</p> <p>• Structure</p> <p>The Regional Ministerial Meeting, held in Geneva on 24-25 September 2001, was the culmination of a broad participatory process involving all organisations and institutions active on sustainable development in the region as well as a great variety of other non governmental stakeholders representing the business sector, trade unions, environmental groups, women's groups and the NGO community at large. UNECE cooperated closely with UNEP in organizing and servicing the Meeting and its preparatory process.</p>	<p>Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 23-24 October 2001</p> <p>• Structure</p> <p>In a two-day meeting the delegates discussed the document regarding "The sustainability of development in Latin America and the Caribbean: Challenges and opportunities," and heard statements by ministers and representatives of international organizations and civil society. ECLAC organized jointly with UNEP and UNDP the regional and sub-regional meetings.</p>	<p>Cairo, Egypt 24 October 2001</p> <p>• Structure</p> <p>In the advent of the Johannesburg Summit, a Joint Secretariat was established to coordinate activities that aim at reconsolidating and redefining sustainable development principles and goals for the Arab Region. The Joint Secretariat comprised ESCWA, the Technical Secretariat of the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE), and the United Nations Environment Programme Regional Office for West Asia</p>

Table 1 (concluded)

Africa	Asia-Pacific	Europe and North America	Latin America and Caribbean	Western Asia
<p>reporting Agenda 21 and highlights 26 priority areas for action.</p>	<p>agencies, multilateral financing institutions, NGOs and other stakeholders.</p> <p>• Outcome The Regional Meeting produced two outcomes: a Chairman’s Summary of the Roundtable; and the Phnom Penh Regional Platform on Sustainable Development for Asia and the Pacific (Platform), which includes a regional assessment of Agenda 21 implementation, key issues and priorities for sustainable development, follow-up initiatives, and financing sustainable development.</p>	<p>• Outcome The Meeting adopted a common regional platform towards the Johannesburg Summit in the form of the Ministerial Statement. This platform established a common understanding on how to address the sustainable development challenges in the ECE region and confirmed the clear readiness of its Member States to be a constructive partner at the global level. It also succeeded in forging a compromise on a number of major issues where there was a divergence of views among countries or group of countries within the region.</p>	<p>• Outcome Delegates adopted the “Rio de Janeiro Platform for Action on the Road to Johannesburg 2002,” which includes sections on: reaffirmation of principles and commitments; obstacles and lessons learned; present considerations; and future commitments.</p>	<p>Prior to the PrepCom, the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) met in a two days special session from 21-22 October,</p> <p>• Outcome The main outcome of the Meeting was the Arab Declaration and the Arab address. Key regional issues emerging from the Cairo meetings included peace and security, poverty, debt, water management and the need for integration across political levels and sectors.</p>

The regional meetings were preceded by 15 subregional consultations (five in Africa, five in Asia-Pacific, one in Europe and four in Latin America and Caribbean). They were held to identify respective priority issues for subregions so that these could be incorporated within the regional platforms.

private sector and facilitate the required reforms in the financial and capital markets to enable the effective functioning of the private sector. The involvement of stakeholders, particularly NGOs and women, in the decision-making process was considered imperative in formulating and implementing policies.

5. Illiteracy, poor health and the prevalence of diseases, air pollution, climate change, deforestation, land degradation and desertification, loss of biodiversity, water pollution, energy, the management of oceans, freshwater and natural disasters were identified as the main priority issues or areas of concern in the regions. National autonomy, good governance, economic growth with equity, political stability, democracy, a minimum level of education and public disclosure of information were identified as prerequisites for sustainable development.

6. The need to consolidate best practices in the regions in supporting the implementation of Agenda 21 was emphasized. Such best practices could be used as case studies by countries in the implementation of Agenda 21. The utilization of science and technology could improve production efficiency, mitigate natural disasters, promote better management of natural resources and control pollution. The needs to facilitate the transfer of clean and environmentally sound technologies on favourable terms to developing countries, particularly technologies such as clean coal technology were emphasized. The use of information and communications technologies was advocated for disseminating information on the efficient use of resources and promoting public participation in implementing sustainable development efforts. The global partnership between developed and developing countries to support sustainable development initiatives must be reinvigorated and developed countries must be urged to meet their commitment related to the official development assistance (ODA) target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product.

C. Highlights of the Regional Platforms/ Statements

1. ECE Ministerial Statement

7. The priorities identified included poverty eradication; sustainable management and conservation of natural resources; environment and health; improving governance and democratic processes at all levels; making globalization work for sustainable development; and education, science and technology. Financing for sustainable development was identified as a crucial cross-cutting issue.

8. Poverty eradication was considered central to sustainable development. Therefore, it was urged that WSSD should promote a better integration between policies for poverty eradication, environmental protection and economic development. For this purpose, it was reiterated that the Summit should bring an outstanding contribution to operationalizing the Millennium Development goals through practical partnerships and setting up effective monitoring systems.

9. The ECE countries recognized the primary role of domestic resources as well as trade liberalization and private financial flows in generating resources for poverty eradication and sustainable development. They decided to encourage exploration of innovative financial resources in cooperation with the private sector. Most ECE countries agreed that the international community should strive to reach the 0.7% of GNP target for ODA.

10. To ensure sustainable management and conservation of the natural resource base, countries were encouraged to set concrete goals on environmental protection, eco-efficiency and resource productivity. The Summit should develop specific initiatives on fresh water, sanitation, oceans and seas (including coral reefs), coastal zones, mountains, land use, forests, biodiversity, energy, minerals and metals, and health and environment. It should urge all countries to strengthen their commitment to promote compliance with, and enforcement of, multilateral environmental agreements. The countries in the region agreed also to promote the development of further agreements that integrate environmental, social and economic aspects.

11. To make globalization work for sustainable development, the countries in the region shared the determination to integrate the poorest countries into the global economy by removing trade distortions, giving duty-free and quota-free market access, and by encouraging investments in the least developed countries. They agreed to enhance the mutually supportive role of multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) and the international trading system.

12. The countries committed to:

- promote full integration of environmental and social objectives into economic and sectoral policies, plans programmes;
- work towards decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation through the removal of distorting subsidies, internalization

- of external costs, use of environmental management systems, eco-procurement and other measures;
- promote changes in production and consumption patterns by eco-design, eco-labeling and other tools;
- increase significantly the share of environmentally sound renewable energy;
- promote the pan-European environment, health and transport process, and the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy;
- implement and comply with regional and subregional agreements relevant to environment and sustainable development, to support the ongoing development of new agreements, and to share the experience with other regions.

13. Good governance was recognized as a part of the necessary foundation for sustainable development. It is expected that the Summit will initiate new efforts to improve partnerships with civil society and business and industry. The Summit should encourage regional initiatives and processes with the participation of major groups on public access to environmental and other information relevant to sustainable development, public participation in decision-making and access to justice, similar to the Aarhus Convention. The commitments and responsibilities of all stakeholders should also be reflected in strategies for sustainable development to be adopted at different levels worldwide by 2002. The Summit should address the precautionary principle, as set forth in the Rio Declaration, since it underlies a number of multilateral agreements.

2. Phnom Penh Regional Platform for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific

14. The Platform identifies seven Asian and Pacific initiatives for follow-up actions, including: capacity-building for sustainable development; poverty reduction for sustainable development; cleaner production and sustainable energy; land management and biodiversity conservation; protection and management of and access to freshwater resources; oceans, coastal and marine resources and sustainable development of small island States; and action on atmosphere and climate change. The initiative for capacity building will build on existing programmes in the region and be closely linked up with all the other regional initiatives on sustainable development. The initiative poverty reduction for sustainable development calls for sustainable economic growth, inclusive social development, effective policies and

institutions and increased investment in both physical and social infrastructure to meet the basic needs of the poor and the promotion of equitable access by all to assets, opportunities and decision-making.

15. The initiative on cleaner production and sustainable energy envisages working with relevant institutions and linking with similar activities and may comprise capacity-building, education and training on clean technologies and renewable energy and energy-efficient technologies; technology transfer activities and implementation of joint research and demonstration projects, as well as policy studies on technology transfer. The initiative on land management and biodiversity conservation may include capacity building, education and training; joint research, surveys and pilot projects. In the area of freshwater, the initiative will aim to promote a national focus on fostering the integrated management of water resources and basins; improve and expand the delivery of services, especially to the poor; foster the conservation of water and increase system efficiency; promote regional cooperation and increase the mutually beneficial use of shared water resources within and between countries.

16. With regard to ocean, coastal and marine resources, the initiative may cover subregional and intra-regional cooperation on the conservation and management of marine ecosystems; waste management to prevent and control land- and sea-based pollution; and implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The initiative may also assist member countries in implementing action plans related to the Convention on the Law of the Sea and the **Waigani Convention**. Furthermore, the initiative will address island vulnerability, and should include the development of acceptable vulnerability indices, which might contribute to the prioritization of actions. The initiative related to action on atmosphere and climate change focuses on air pollution in Asia and the Pacific. The initiatives would address urban air pollution, transboundary air pollution and sandstorms as well as concrete efforts to increase international and domestic action to address adaptation to climate change consistent with the provisions of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol.

17. The Platform also highlights the importance of mobilizing in a coherent manner all available resources, especially domestic, for financing sustainable development. However, it also recognizes that developing countries, economies in transition and small island developing countries will continue to need international financial assistance in order to achieve sustainable development. It therefore urges all the developed countries to

strive to reach the accepted United Nations ODA target of 0.7 per cent of their gross national product as soon as possible. In addition, developed countries are called upon to pursue the transfer of environmentally sound technologies and know-how to developing countries on favourable terms in accordance with Agenda 21. Furthermore, additional resources could also be obtained through increased participation by civil society and the private sector. Civil society is an important partner in improving environmental management and accountability. The business sector is a potent catalyst for development and a critical partner in the pursuit of eco-efficiency.

18. The Platform further recognizes the importance of strengthening the role of ESCAP in implementing, coordinating and monitoring the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21. It also calls for regional reviews at ESCAP sessions, as necessary. Moreover, subregional and regional concrete initiatives on sustainable development should continue to be developed in cooperation with donor countries and relevant regional and international organizations.

3. Rio de Janeiro Platform for Action on the Road to Johannesburg 2002

19. The Platform identified several initiatives for follow-up actions, including institutional structure for sustainable development; financing and technology transfer; and other key areas. The need for institutional structure calls for the development of local, national and regional capacities through a lasting strategic alliance among all development actors so that advantage can be taken at the local level of the potential of globalization through an exchange of experiences and best practices within and between countries, the promotion of formal and informal education for national and local leaders, and support for applied research and technological innovation at all levels. It also requires the strengthening of regional institutions in relation to the design and implementation of programmes and projects to promote the integration of economic, social and environmental policies through the organization of workshops, forums, high-level conferences and South-South cooperation programmes. Finally, it supposes more efficient ways of addressing the issue of sustainable development in multilateral forums through the use of flexible, suitable mechanisms for rationalizing efforts and the use of resources more fully and through the promotion of synergies among the relevant conventions, as set forth in Agenda 21, by national sustainable development councils, among others, in order to articulate economic, social and environmental policies with the participation of the population.

20. In so far as financing sustainable development and technology transfer are concerned, the Platform reiterates the importance of the developed countries meeting the commitment to allocate 0.7% of their GDP in cooperation for development. Equally important is to recognize that the burden of debt and debt servicing faced by many countries of the region, particularly in the face of declining official development assistance and their limited ability to attract new financing and investment, have continued to undermine strategies to mobilize resources for sustainable development. This justifies the need for renewed consideration of the possibility of creating mechanisms to relieve the burden of highly-indebted countries, as well as the need to increase, through the creation of new, innovative financial instruments, concessional multilateral funding for the implementation of sustainable development programmes.

21. The Platform emphasized that developing countries can succeed in fulfilling their international commitments regarding sustainable development only if they have access to adequate financing and technology transfers, bearing in mind that the promotion of development and the eradication of poverty are the overriding priorities for developing countries. Attention should be given in this respect, to the existing complementarities among trade, investment, environmental quality, social well-being, growth, the benefits of the sustainable use of natural resources and the formation of an open and inclusive world economic system in which the environmental dimension constitutes an opportunity rather than a barrier to investment and trade. This means that market access for developing countries' products are considered as an essential factor in sustainable development.

22. The Platform especially noted the importance of assessing vulnerability and quantifying the progress made towards sustainable development, as well as the need to develop a core set of data and indicators. This would include a vulnerability index that will make it possible to measure progress towards sustainable development, taking into account the unique features of Caribbean countries and in keeping with Agenda 21 and the Barbados Programme of Action.

23. The Platform further underscored the need to diversify the energy supply and foster energy efficiency, to assess the potential of conventional sources and to increase the share of renewable sources and the need for greater support in this area from financial agencies in order to meet the needs of each country. The need for energy efficiency and for the improvement of the quality of life of Latin American and the Caribbean populations also requires the promotion of an environmentally sustainable form of urban management linked

to more rational production and consumption patterns that are associated with the reduction of emissions and the generation of less waste; and the establishment of more effective mechanisms for urban planning and for augmenting wastewater treatment facilities.

24. It called upon all countries that have not yet done so to ratify the Convention on Biological Diversity as soon as possible. This urgent action will ensure equitable access to the benefits afforded by the use of genetic resources through the implementation of national and international regulatory schemes for this purpose. In addition, the Platform highlighted the urgent need for the international community to continue its efforts to implement and secure the early entry into force, as universally as possible, of the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety with a view to ensuring that it enters into effect before the World Summit on Sustainable Development is convened. A call was made upon all the countries that have not yet done so to expedite ratification of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change with a view to ensuring its entry into force prior to the World Summit on Sustainable Development. This call applied also to the ratification of the Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

25. Finally, the international community was called upon to reaffirm its commitment and political will so that, through a renewed form of cooperation within a spirit of solidarity, and based on the recognition of a responsible, ethical relationship between human beings and nature, effective action can be taken at the local, national, regional and global levels to ensure the full implementation of existing agreements for sustainable development, as this is the best guarantee of a more just world within a context of global peace.

26. In the light of these considerations, the Platform proposed the following central theme for the World Summit on Sustainable Development: "Towards a new globalization which ensures that development is sustainable, equitable and inclusive".

4. The African Ministerial Statement to the World Summit on Sustainable Development

27. The Ministerial Statement reaffirmed that poverty eradication is an indispensable requirement for sustainable development and reiterated their commitment to address all three components of sustainable development –namely economic growth and development, social

development and environmental protection, as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars– in a balanced way, in conformity with the fundamental principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.

28. It recognized that holding the Summit in Africa would provide a unique opportunity for a genuine international partnership to achieve the development goals enunciated in the Millennium Declaration and in the outcome of United Nations conferences and summits held since Rio, as well as those regional initiatives that Africa has adopted. The statement affirmed that the achievement of those development goals is contingent on an enabling international environment premised on the legitimate development priorities of developing countries, which addresses the fundamental challenges of financing for development, globalization and market access in export sectors of interest to them, thus reaching a comprehensive and lasting solution to their crippling external debt problems.

29. It recalled that success in meeting the objectives of development and poverty eradication depends, inter-alia, on good governance within each country and at the international level, as well as on transparency in financial, monetary and trading systems. The Ministers expressed their commitment to an open and equitable rule-based, predictable and non-discriminatory multi-lateral trading and financial system.

30. It expressed concern on the limited progress in the implementation of Agenda 21, which stems from the lack of fulfilment by the international community of its commitments made in Rio with regard to the means of implementation, thereby hampering the achievement of sustainable development in developing countries, particularly in Africa. The implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States has similarly been hampered. Further, it reconfirmed that the Johannesburg Summit should not renegotiate the outcomes of Rio but should result in a concrete programme of action with time-bound measures and well-specified sources of funding to implement them.

31. It reiterated that a system of monitoring contributes to the effectiveness of implementation. It therefore called upon the World Summit on Sustainable Development to establish a follow-up mechanism as an integral component of all the elements of its programme of action in terms of resource flow and implementation, and to create the system required to make that possible.

32. The statement emphasized that poverty, underdevelopment, marginalization, social exclusion and economic disparities are closely

associated with the legacy of colonialism as well as the continued exploitation of African resources. It recognized the negative economic, social and cultural consequence thereof, that have contributed significantly to the underdevelopment of developing countries and, in particular, of Africa. In this context, it urged the Summit to reaffirm the right to development and to adopt concrete mechanisms to free the entire human race from want.

33. It recognized the important role played by the civil society and the need to ensure its full participation in achieving sustainable development. It noted with appreciation the role of the business sector and civil society, including the youth and labour segments in pursuit of the sustainable development agenda and to the preparatory process in the African region.

34. It affirmed the commitment to partnership for the implementation of the WSSD outcomes, the mobilization of major groups and appropriately capacitating these groups to fruitfully engage in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda and, eventually, in the form of the Johannesburg Programme of Action. The governments were invited to work together with major groups to prepare concrete inputs to a programme of action. The statement proposed that the theme “People, planet, prosperity” underpins the focus on the three pillars of sustainable development; they further proposed this theme as the slogan for the Johannesburg Summit.

35. Finally, it underscored the belief that the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD) should be a framework for sustainable development in Africa. The NEPAD, which is a pledge by African leaders, is based on a common vision and a firm and shared conviction, that they have a pressing duty to eradicate poverty and to place their countries, both individually and collectively, on a path of sustained growth and development, and at the same time, to participate actively in the world economy and body politic. This programme is anchored on a determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalizing world.

36. The areas of priorities identified included: eradication of poverty; industrial development; agriculture and food security; human development; financing for sustainable development; trade and market access; infrastructure and sustainable human settlements; desertification and land degradation; coastal and marine environments; climate change and atmosphere; fresh water and sanitation; management of chemical products; disaster prevention; energy; governance; science and technology development; and support for regional cooperation and economic integration.

5. Platform of Priorities for Action and Means of Implementation in West Asia

37. The Platform identifies 11 priority areas for action, including poverty alleviation and social integration; debt burden; peace and security; managing population growth and distribution; education, capacity-building and research; technology transfer; sustainable management of natural resources; governance and public participation for sustainable development; patterns of consumption; cultural heritage; and globalization and trade.

38. It is imperative to strengthen political commitments and efforts to implement sustainable development policies and enhance the quality of life for all sectors of the population, with special emphasis on vulnerable groups such as women, children and the disabled. The process of reaching this goal should seek to: stabilize population growth; improve access and quality of education; restructure technical and vocational training to fill in gaps in the labor market; supply and train communities in information technology to facilitate knowledge transfer; and provide equitable access to public services among all social groups.

39. Countries of the region are urged to minimize resorting to debt, and if necessary to seek national and regional sources rather than depend on foreign aid. International creditors are urged to ease debt burden for countries that pursue greater transparency, better governance and more appropriate institutional set-up.

40. Achieving regional stability, peace, and security is required to advance sustainable development in the region and to reduce population displacement and migration. A number of key areas regarding peace and security have been identified as requiring the support of the international communities and the United Nations system. Population policies should be developed, including family planning and awareness with respect to impacts of unsustainable population growth. Emphasis should be given to women's development, childcare and regional labor migration.

41. Education and training should be redirected to fulfil the demands of the market and should be streamlined with sustainable development needs. Education should be looked at as a societal business not only as a government business, in which government, civil society and private sector determine the needs of the society and the job market, and share the responsibilities. The development of indigenous technologies is important to support sustainable development. The private sector in the region should take a

proactive role in research and development through specialized units or through the support to academic and other research institutions. This expansion of the research base would discourage brain drain.

42. The use of cleaner production strategies, investment in relevant indigenous technology, encouragement of research, the transfer of appropriate but not necessarily the most advanced technology, and linkage of research and development to market demand in order to provide the appropriate technology at reasonable prices should be encouraged.

43. Countries of the region are encouraged to adopt integrated water resources management, including demand management approaches, and to develop renewable and non-conventional resources. Countries should develop programs for the rehabilitation of degraded land including meadows and forests, and develop national desertification strategies and action plans in order to implement appropriate programs to combat desertification. Countries should adopt an integrated approach to address coastal and marine resources issues, including the adoption of ICAM for the sustainable development of coastal and marine environment. There is a need to review and strengthen national strategies –or develop them where lacking– in order to conserve and protect biodiversity, and to create biodiversity information systems. There is a need to improve and establish air pollution monitoring and control programs for mobile and stationary emission sources, and to continue assessment and analysis of ambient air data. Countries should continue to phase out the use of ODS and continue implementation of the Montreal Protocol.

44. The need for good governance is strongly emphasized to include strengthening the legal framework, nurturing democracy, accountability and transparency, effective participation of civil society, especially women and youth, and the private sector in the decision making process. National multi-stakeholder consultations should become fora for real participation and dialogue. It is necessary to direct the role of media, educational institutions, and civil society groups to change the materialistic consumption patterns. There is also a need to harmonize production and environmental standards among ESCWA countries.

45. Countries of the region should intensify efforts to revive, preserve, maintain, and prudently manage natural and cultural heritage. The culture of the region should be protected from invasion of foreign norms by reviving the ESCWA and Islamic cultural values. It is also essential to create awareness of the culture and heritage of the region at the global level; in the meanwhile the region should be receptive and tolerant to other cultures.

46. In order to improve competitiveness and increase market access, countries need to improve efficiency, product standards, and to align production technologies with international standards, including environmental standards. Countries need to create the right environment for full inclusion in globalization including essential infrastructure, services, and institutional set-up. Countries are urged to take measures to avoid the negative impacts of globalization, and to address the cost associated with globalization on technical, economic, environmental, and social levels. Countries of the region should support the establishment of Pan-Arab Free-Trade Area as a first step in developing a regional economic integration.

47. At the regional level, a number of key measures and mechanisms need to be considered such as the encouragement of the private sector to invest in large scale regional projects, including the development of regional infrastructures, encouragement of partnerships between governments and beneficiary parties to generate funds for sustainable development; creation of favorable conditions and encourage investors including expatriates, and foreign investors to invest in the region. At the global level, an atmosphere conducive to investment in developing countries needs to be created by encouraging private multi-national investors to invest in the region; urging developed countries to reconsider their debt policies toward the region to be more favorable in promoting sustainable development, including debt swap, rescheduling, and waiving.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF AGENDA 21 AT THE REGIONAL LEVEL: CHALLENGES AND ISSUES

48. UNCED provided the international community with the fundamental principles and the programme of action for achieving sustainable development. The past decade saw a growing awareness of the environmental dimension of development, resulting from the Rio process and in response to various global conventions. Nevertheless, although the consensus achieved in 1992 enhanced awareness of the environmental dimension of development and promoted many global, regional and national initiatives, the implementation of Agenda 21 itself made only modest progress in practical terms.

49. As a result, the problems of environmental stress, resource degradation, social malaise and poverty remain practically undiminished. In fact, many developing countries, especially in Africa and the least developed countries (LDCs) as well as economies in transition, have witnessed aggravation, often rendered more complex by demographic and urbanization challenges. The acceleration of economic globalization has added both to the urgency and the complexity of meeting these challenges.

50. No-where are the shortfalls more pronounced than in the trends in financing for sustainable development, when compared to the targets set forth in the Rio Summit in 1992. However, some progress has been achieved at the national level in terms of institutional development and modest but concrete national financing mechanisms to support environmental policies and actions. Unfortunately, the principles of environmental protection and sustainable development are still viewed in many sectors as a constraint to economic growth and competitiveness, a concept, which needs to be carefully addressed.

51. An overview of the results achieved since the Rio Conference point to the need for a more holistic approach towards sustainable development. Consequently, a refinement of strategies and sharper policy perspectives aimed at effective implementation of Agenda 21, especially at the regional and national level –complemented by stronger and effective international mechanisms in terms of global and regional support as well as significantly greater financial commitments, is essential.

52. There is undoubtedly a gap in implementation, which is particularly visible in four areas. First, a fragmented approach has been adopted towards sustainable development. Second, no major changes have occurred since

UNCED in the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, which are putting the natural life support system at peril. Third, there is a lack of mutually coherent policies or approaches in the areas of finance, trade, investment, technology and sustainable development. In a globalizing world, the need for consistency and coherence in such policies has become more important than ever before. Fourth, the financial resources required for implementing Agenda 21 have not been forthcoming and mechanisms for the transfer of technology have not improved. Since 1992, official development assistance (ODA) has declined steadily, the burden of the debt has constrained options for poor countries, and the expanding flows of private investment have been volatile and directed only at a few countries and sectors ⁴.

53. In the following sections a synthesis of progress achieved in the last ten years after UNCED in the implementation of Agenda 21, has been presented at the regional level

A. Implementation of Agenda 21 in the ECE Region

54. Significant growth in GDP per capita and industrial production in Western Europe and North America over the past decade has been accompanied by structural changes in the production system, with a shift from material- and energy-intensive sectors to services. Progress has been made in improving society's eco-efficiency and in decoupling resource use and economic growth, but these gains have been offset by overall increases in the volume of goods and services consumed and discarded. Eco-efficiency gains in the energy sector in western Europe and North America are offset by an increasing use of oil, generating more emissions of CO₂ and other pollutants.

55. The central and east European countries and the newly independent States are beginning to recover from the economic collapse of the early 1990s. Yet, only a few of these countries have surpassed their 1989 output level. Given the low level of domestic resources, the restricted access of many economies in transition to the international financial markets and the limited amount of technical assistance received, some of these countries face severe resource constraints, hampering their progress towards sustainable development.

⁴ E/CN.17/2002/PC.2.7 ECOSOC, "Implementing Agenda 21 – Report of the Secretary - General", 19 December 2001, New York.

56. Poverty continues to be a major concern in many parts of the region. In several countries with economies in transition more than half the population lives below the national poverty line. Poverty and unemployment often lead to human insecurity in urban areas, ill health, loss of self-respect, and a sense of failure and social exclusion.

57. Environmental pressures from consumption have intensified and may worsen in many areas as a result of increasing per capita incomes and resource- and pollution-intensive lifestyles. Although there are still large differences in some consumption patterns between western countries and economies in transition, it may be expected that consumption patterns in central and eastern Europe and the newly independent States will follow the same path as in western Europe. Against this background, there are increasing concerns about the growing amount of toxic waste and the environmental hazards posed by the recycling and disposal of new materials. The development and use of more complex technologies also increase the risk of accidents. Clean production and integrated pollution control concepts still need to be put into practice.

58. The transport infrastructure in most countries is used beyond its capacity. Traffic congestion causes significant economic losses and generates health problems. Transport of goods by trucks has dramatically increased, affecting air quality and contributing to environmental decline in urban and rural areas, including mountain valleys. The shift from rail and other forms of public transportation to car and air travel continues, even during the economic recession in economies in transition. Low road transport prices and inconvenient public transport provide no incentives for consumers to change their behaviour.

59. Western European and North American agriculture has become more specialized, intensified, chemical dependent and concentrated in areas with low production costs. Despite agricultural policy reforms, the threat of continued polarization between industrial agriculture and marginal agriculture remains, impacting negatively on the environment, in particular on biodiversity and water quality, and society as a whole.

60. The region continues to face severe local, transboundary and international environmental problems. These include emissions of greenhouse gases; air and water pollution, biodiversity loss, waste generation, technological hazards and risks to human health caused by harmful chemicals and genetically modified organisms. Despite progress in some of these areas, such as the reduction in emissions of some air pollutants, additional measures

will still be needed to protect the environment and human health. Pollution of surface and groundwater is still a serious issue in the whole region. Access to water both for drinking and for agriculture is a major problem in some parts of the region. The regional seas surrounding Europe and North America continue to suffer from coastal pollution and degradation, in particular through the impact of tourism..

61. The development of democratic institutions and societies has been one of the main challenges of the transition process and many countries across the region have made important progress in establishing more democratic systems. Information, participation and access to justice are seen as essential elements of a true participatory democracy. However, there is room for improvement in public participation laws and practices in all countries of the region. In particular, the enforcement structures in the newly independent States are still too weak. More generally, there are still obstacles to promoting dialogue between policy makers and civil society and communicating sustainable development issues to decision makers.

62. Significant new legally binding regional and subregional environmental conventions have come into force. These have successfully integrated all three pillars of sustainable development. However, even though this is a clear indication of progress, the difficulties of some parties in ratification of and compliance with these conventions, weaken overall implementation

63. Overall, short-term concerns still take precedence over long-term principles of intergenerational equity or the precautionary approach. No single country in the region has fully implemented its declarations about integrating environmental and social considerations into decision-making. In order to stimulate and guide the implementation of these commitments, monitoring and evaluating progress towards sustainable development need to be strengthened, both at the national and regional levels.

B. Implementation of Agenda 21 in Asia and the Pacific

64. The Asian and Pacific region has a critical role to play in promoting global sustainable development. It is the largest region in the world covering almost half the earth's surface and has 23 per cent of total land area, the largest ocean, the Pacific, and the most diverse ecology, with two-thirds of the world's coral reefs. It has also over half of the world's population and the largest population of the world's poor.

65. Since the Rio Conference, the Asian and Pacific region has made significant gains in many areas of sustainable development. The basic physical and social infrastructure for promoting economic activity and alleviating poverty has been provided and moderate progress has been achieved in the conservation and management of natural resources and ecosystems. The region has made notable progress in environmental policy, legislation and institution building, and in promoting partnership and participation among Governments, local communities, non-governmental organizations and civil society. Nevertheless, the region's environment continues to deteriorate and the number of poor people continues to increase, outpacing the best efforts of many countries in the region.

66. A combination of factors has made it difficult for countries in the region to achieve sustainable development. The widespread poverty prevailing in the region and inadequate financial resources have been among the most serious constraints to effective implementation. The financial crisis in 1997, the isolation and vulnerability of small island developing States and recurrent natural disasters have made the situation even more difficult. The emerging concerns of climate change and implementation of a large number of international and regional conventions have placed additional pressures on the limited resources of Governments of the developing countries of the region already fighting a battle against poverty and pollution. Inadequate institutional and technical capacity and unavailability of environmentally sound technologies have also been significant constraints to regional progress towards sustainable development. Finally, the lack of peace, stability and security in some parts of the region seriously impedes the implementation of sustainable development strategies at the national and regional levels.

67. During the period under review, the annual GDP growth of many countries in the region had been the fastest in the world at 7 per cent or higher.⁵ The percentage of people provided with drinking water had improved; poverty, incidence of diseases, child mortality in North-East and South-East Asia and in the Pacific had decreased; and in South Asia, the percentage of the population below the poverty line had decreased, even though the absolute number of poor had increased because of rapid population growth.

⁵ *Economic and Social Survey of Asia and the Pacific 1997* (United Nations publication, ST/ESCAP/1727).

68. Moderate progress had been achieved in the conservation and management of natural resources and ecosystems. The region led the world in tropical forest plantation development and protected areas for biodiversity conservation had increased, although management plans and resources were generally inadequate. There was wide acceptance of the importance of integrated management of watersheds and there had been a shift towards integrated planning of coastal and marine zones in many countries of the region. Some countries had developed natural resources accounting systems and environmental impact assessment was being widely used in the region and institutionalized through legislation.

69. The region had made significant strides to promote sustainable development at the local level with Government-NGO-private sector partnerships. Many examples of such successes were documented⁶ where costs were recovered within a short period. Such examples include micro-credit for poverty reduction renewable domestic energy projects; rainwater harvesting; partnership building in urban settlement management; improved farm management techniques; common property resource management; and community-based fisheries management.

70. In summary, a review of the progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 reveals that: (a) significant achievements have been made in many areas, including the development of environmental policies, institutions and legislation, but institutional and policy failures continue to be major causes of unsustainable development and environmental degradation; (b) regional and subregional cooperation on priority areas of concern, such as urban environmental improvement, marine pollution, freshwater management, sustainable energy development, public participation and capacity-building, have been strengthened, but many areas still need to be addressed adequately; and (c) varying levels of commitments have been made at various subregional and regional forums, but financial and technical resources continue to be severely limited. Given, therefore, the scope and depth of Agenda 21, a great deal of work still remains to be done.

⁶ ADB, *Asian Development Outlook 2000*.

C. Implementation of Agenda 21 in Latin America and the Caribbean⁷

71. Although Latin America and the Caribbean enthusiastically adopted the agreements reached at the Earth Summit in 1992, the drive to implement them faded as the decade wore on. Domestic structural constraints, compounded by distortions in the interpretation and application of the accords, the biases introduced by various international negotiations and global asymmetries, among other factors, have steadily eroded the sustainable development agenda.

72. Although the region has made clear institutional and regulatory changes, it has failed to harness the reforming and mobilizing potential of the sustainability agenda. The foundations for this have been laid, but Latin America and the Caribbean are still in the preliminary stages of a transition to sustainable development.

73. In the past decade, awareness of the environmental aspects of development and the related concept of sustainable development has gradually penetrated public policy and some economic and social practices in countries in the region. This has been reflected in the development of institutions, strategies and policies, as follows:

- The Programme of Action for Small-Island Developing States;
- The Alliance for Sustainable Development in Central America (ALIDES);
- Mercosur;
- The Andean Community of Nations;
- The Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.

74. A novel component of the concept of sustainable development since the Earth Summit has been the institutionalization of citizen advisory bodies of varied and representative composition, and this process speeded up in Latin America and the Caribbean from 1997 onward, when many national sustainable development councils or commissions were set up. Their function is to ensure that national plans comply with the objectives of Agenda 21 and promote participation in the process of generating public policies and open up spaces for the discussion of medium- and long-term strategies.

⁷ This point was written on the basis of the document entitled: "The sustainability of development in Latin America and the Caribbean: challenges and opportunities", UN ECLAC / UNEP Doc. No. LC/G.2154(CONF.90/3), 5 October 2001, Santiago, Chile.

Decentralization processes taking place in the region have also made a contribution in this respect, furthering the democratization of the countries and bringing government closer to citizens. Thus, there have been initiatives at the municipal level, which links together groups of municipalities to promote local versions of Agenda 21. Although concrete results are not yet sufficiently widespread, there is a very proactive tendency among the local authorities of the region to use long-term local development strategies adopted on the basis of participatory planning processes which many of these authorities actually refers to as Local Agenda 21. Among the many actions taken within this framework are sustainable land use, initiatives against unemployment and to foster social disintegration, the application of appropriate population and spatial distribution policies, rational use of energy, the establishment of sustainable systems of transport and communications, conservation and rehabilitation of historical and cultural heritage landmarks, and the improvement of rural settlements.

75. An assessment of the economic, social and environmental situation, together with a review of the efforts made, reveals a disturbing situation. The post-Rio decade has witnessed intensive economic change in the region, which is now more integrated into global currents and subject to tensions that generate new and heightened uncertainty and instability. At the same time, the benefits of recent global processes have not yet reached the vast majority of Latin American and Caribbean people, and progress towards the goals of equity has stagnated.

76. Economic performance (growth of 3% average) has been insufficient to overcome the deficits that were already affecting the region at the time of the Earth Summit, and more progress has been made in improving macroeconomic variables than in enhancing social well-being. Levels of inequality and inequity have failed to improve in most countries and have actually worsened in comparison to the developed world. The main advances in the area of trade were a rise in exports, an upsurge of trade and investment within subregional integration schemes, and the signing of a large number of free trade agreements with other countries and regions. Unresolved weakness include a lack of export diversification, the region's low share of world trade, the numerous barriers to free trade that still exist and the adverse effects of financial and macroeconomic volatility on the dynamic of commercial transactions.

77. The region is no more socially sustainable than it was 10 years ago. The main trends of the social situation in the region in the 1990s were the continuing demographic transition and gradual population ageing, inadequate

job creation, a relative decline in poverty combined with rising inequality in a number of countries, progress in gender equity, recovery of social investment, and implementation of major reforms to social policies and sectors. Relative poverty has decreased very little, and the number of people unable to cover even a minimum of basic expenditures has grown. As a result, the absolute number of people living in poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean, at 211 million, is now higher than ever. Unemployment trends over the decade increased from 5.7% in 1991 to 8.5% in 2000. The informal sector also increased its share of urban employment. In the 1990s seven out of every ten jobs generated in cities, were in the informal sector. The position of those in work became more insecure and unstable. Poor income distribution was also a reflection of serious problems of social stratification and exclusion.

78. Over the last decade the region also exhibited a marked degree of vulnerability to a series of more intense and frequent natural phenomena that are impacting on increasingly fragile ecological and social systems. This has resulted in greater human, environmental and economic insecurity, further undermining sustainability and generating heightened uncertainty, especially for island States.

79. The region confronts a number of important challenges, such as:
- The principles of environmental protection and sustainable development continue to be viewed by most of the production sectors and a significant number of government economic sectors as external interference that hinder development;
 - The economic policies of the energy, agricultural, industrial and urban developments sectors which cause conflicting environmental practices, call for a review of policies and instruments for environmental management;
 - Liberal trade policies in the region and the increase in foreign direct investment (FDI) have altered the course of the development process, the export profile and, with it, the environment as well. Insofar as the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean are seeking more and better international trade linkages, their pattern of production specialization in resource-intensive branches place the region in a more vulnerable situation in terms of the environmental demands;
 - Between the Rio and Johannesburg summits, 80 million people will have been added to the region's population, and when that population eventually stabilizes (sometime after the middle of the twenty-first century), Latin America and the Caribbean will have 300 million additional inhabitants;

- Today, more than ever, the region needs to make progress in science, technology, innovation and adaptability in order to deepen knowledge of its natural resources, undertake research that addresses its own priorities, restore appropriate technologies and promote the sustainable use of biotic resources based on appropriate risk assessment using a precautionary approach;
- Mechanisms for protecting intellectual property –in terms of both formal and informal knowledge– relating to biodiversity are becoming especially important.

D. Implementation of Agenda 21 in Africa

80. African countries entered the 1990s with major political and economic problems, that were manifest in declining agricultural and industrial productivity, sporadic famines, increasing environmental degradation, levels of malnutrition and debt, declining capacity to service debt, social unrest, collapsing infrastructure and disintegration of public institutions. These problems are forcing most African countries to search for ways of renewing their economies and accessing the paths towards sustainable development. Finding long-term solutions to the problems of Africa has become increasingly critical.

81. In general, progress has been made in some countries in terms of institutional development, international consensus building, participatory processes, and private sector actions, as well as in curbing pollution and slowing the rate of resource degradation. Recent analyses, however, show that trends are worsening. On the eve of the WSSD, the region is plagued with serious environmental problems, some of which are due to global developments and changing conditions, while others are internally orchestrated.

82. As a follow-up to UNCED, some African countries established institutions and enacted laws to manage the environment, for example, secretariats charged specifically with coordinating the implementations of Agenda 21 and other UNCED outputs. National environmental plans and policies were drawn up and enacted, for example, in areas such as pollution monitoring, the conservation of natural resources, population control, education and training, land, water and sanitation, forest and health. More recently, some countries have established committees to enhance the relationship between trade and the environment to ensure that they are mutually supportive.

83. Regarding economic aspects, African economies have declined and in some cases are near collapse, both in quantitative and qualitative terms. The rate of economic growth in at least half of the region has stayed below 2 per cent per annum –measured in terms of Gross Domestic Product (GDP)– while the human population has grown by an average of 4 per cent per annum. Economic goods and services have been relatively inaccessible for many African households. Rural populations have continued to draw their economic needs directly from natural resources and fragile ecological systems.

84. In 1998, the external debt of sub-Saharan Africa stood at over \$US230 billion (the debt for the whole of Africa was \$US324.7 billion). Of 52 African countries (excluding Eritrea because of non-availability of data), the World Bank classified 32 of them as severely indebted and 11 as moderately indebted. During the last decade, a substantial proportion of Africa's export earnings has been used for debt repayment through natural resources export, resulting in an inability to implement sustainable development strategies.

85. Globalization poses new and major challenges in Africa. Despite the great opportunities globalization offers, its benefits are unevenly distributed and yet its costs are borne by all. The benefits of globalization are concentrated in a small number of countries. Increased regional integration/cooperation is essential to promote and develop African economic markets, support economic growth and strengthen Africa's negotiating position with other regional groupings and transnational corporations.

86. The HIV/AIDS pandemic threatens the lives of millions of Africans, as well as the economic and political viability of many States of the region. Africa's development and governance efforts will be in jeopardy unless effective strategies are put in place to halt and reverse the trends.

87. Since 1970, more than 30 wars have been fought in Africa, the vast majority of them intra-State in origin. In 1996 alone, 14 of the 53 countries of Africa were afflicted by armed conflicts, accounting for more than half of war-related deaths worldwide and resulting in more than 8 million refugees, returnees and displaced persons. Achieving durable peace and social stability in the region is of paramount importance. Without these basic conditions, the achievement of sustainable development will continue to be illusory. Good governance, regional cooperation and active mechanisms for conflict prevention and resolution are key requirements in achieving these ends.

88. Some progress has been made in the area of regional cooperation. The Summit of African Heads of State and Government, convened in Lusaka, Zambia, in July 2001, established the African Union (AU) to deal with the continent's crises in the political, economic and social fields, as a replacement for the Organization of African Unity (OAU), set up in 1963. The Lusaka Summit adopted the New African Initiative, which is a pledge by African leaders, based on common vision and shared conviction to eradicate poverty and promote sustainable development.

89. Prior to UNCED, for many countries in the region, addressing socio-economic and environmental issues was the monopoly of the State. The Earth Summit and post Rio conferences stressed the need for public participation in formulating and implementing projects. In a number of countries, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been integrated into policy-making organs such as national environment advisory committees.

90. In spite of the difficulties experienced in the implementation of Agenda 21, mainly due to weak financial constraints and insufficient technology transfer, reviews carried out within the framework of the African preparatory process have indicated that some of major gains made by countries include:

- Inter-agency coordination mechanism have been established/strengthened;
- Civil Society including NGOs, women groups, youth groups and the private sector are more and more being involved in the design and implementation of sustainable development strategies and action plans;
- The democratization process has yielded some encouraging results and there is greater decentralization of natural resources management;
- Life expectancy and access to education especially for girls have improved;
- Subregional integration has increased and regional integration strengthened.

E. Implementation of Agenda 21 in Western Asia

91. The region, known for being the crucible of the three great monotheistic religions and for having an exceptional strategic geographic location, is rich in energy resources, including oil, gas and is extremely rich

in cultural heritage. It is, however, also known for its limited water and fertile land resources. It has been a focal point for political conflicts and has witnessed many struggles and wars, which have hindered its development, disturbed its stability and drained its resources. Despite the significant progress in poverty reduction, the region has experienced an income inequality that is evident in the widening gap between urban and rural areas and the rich and poor population in urban centers.

92. Over the past decade, the ESCWA region has witnessed marked improvements in health, fertility, education and literacy, as well as a strengthening in the status of women and an expanded role for civil society. However, this progress has been achieved in face of increasing population pressures, fluctuating economic conditions, prevailing unemployment and continued poverty and regional conflict. As governments in West Asia become less interventionist and more decentralized, the role of civil society has become increasingly important in building social capital and representing private interests.

93. West Asia has tremendous oil and natural gas resources. Furthermore, oil and gas revenues continue to play a significant role in the region's economy despite progress in economic diversification. This leaves regional investment and development vulnerable to wide fluctuations in the world oil market. The industry sector of West Asian countries has been unable to progress to more knowledge-based production of higher value added commodities, and has remained unprepared to cope with the effects of trade liberalization and rapid technological change. Agriculture and food production is a significant contributor to the national economy of most countries of the ESCWA region. Agriculture remains the primary user of freshwater in the region consuming more than 80 percent of resources available in West Asia.

94. The main driving forces for water problems in the region are the burgeoning population, the accelerated development and competition for water in the urban, industrial and agricultural sectors, ineffective water management policies and practices, erratic precipitation and the highly volatile regional peace and security situation. The growing water claims of upstream riparian countries of shared water resources has resulted in further reducing the share of the downstream countries. Water quality has also become a major issue of concern in the Western Asia region. Major threats to marine and coastal environments in the region include increasing pressures from urban expansion, physical alteration and destruction of habitats; pollution from sewage, solid wastes, industrial effluents, oil spills,

contamination from agriculture discharges, destruction from tourism and recreation activities and resource depletion in the form of over-fishing and introduction of alien species. The degradation of land resources in the region continues to be one of the most prominent environmental issues. The underlying threats to biodiversity in the region include population growth, agricultural and urban expansion to ecologically important areas, poverty and unsustainable use of biota, industrial pollution, and macro-scale stress such as drought.

95. The main sources of air pollution in the region are energy and industrial production as well as vehicular emissions, which tend to expand with economic growth.