

# Earth Summit '92

The United Nations Conference  
on Environment and Development

Rio de Janeiro 1992





# Earth Summit 1992

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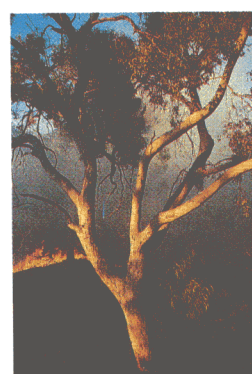
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# Contents



<b>Introduction</b>	<i>Boutros Boutros-Ghali</i>	7
<b>Foreword</b>	<i>Maurice Strong</i>	9
<b>The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development</b>		11
<b>From Stockholm to Rio</b>	<i>Richard Sandbrook, OBE</i>	15
<b>An Environmental Revolution</b>	<i>Lester R. Brown</i>	18
<b>Living in a Time of Change</b>	<i>Chris Church</i>	22
<b>Changing Business Attitudes</b>	<i>Lloyd Timberlake</i>	29
<b>Priorities for the Future</b>	<i>Reg Green</i>	32
<b>A Growing Strength</b>	<i>Wangari Maathi</i>	37
<b>The Institutions Debate</b>	<i>Lee A. Kimball</i>	38
<b>Conflicts and Dilemmas</b>	<i>David Lascelles</i>	42

<b>Agenda 21</b>		46
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>Preamble</b>	47

<b>Section I</b>	<b>Social and Economic Dimensions</b>	
<b>Chapter 2</b>	International cooperation to accelerate sustainable development in developing countries and related domestic policies	49
<b>Chapter 3</b>	Combating poverty	55
<b>Chapter 4</b>	Changing consumption patterns	58
<b>Chapter 5</b>	Demographic dynamics and sustainability	61
<b>Chapter 6</b>	Protecting and promoting human health	67
<b>Chapter 7</b>	Promoting sustainable human settlement development	76
<b>Chapter 8</b>	Integrating environment and development in decision-making	87

<b>Section II</b>	<b>Conservation and Management of Resources for Development</b>	
<b>Chapter 9</b>	Protecting the atmosphere	96
<b>Chapter 10</b>	Integrated approach to the planning and management of land resources	102
<b>Chapter 11</b>	Combating deforestation	105
<b>Chapter 12</b>	Managing fragile ecosystems: combating desertification and drought	111
<b>Chapter 13</b>	Managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development	119
<b>Chapter 14</b>	Promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development	120
<b>Chapter 15</b>	Conservation of biological diversity	129
<b>Chapter 16</b>	Environmentally sound management of biotechnology	133
<b>Chapter 17</b>	Protection of the oceans, all kinds of seas, including enclosed and semi-enclosed areas, and coastal areas and the protection, rational use and development of their living resources	139

<b>Chapter 18</b>	Protection of the quality and supply of freshwater resources: application of integrated approaches to the development, management and use of water resources	157
<b>Chapter 19</b>	Environmentally sound management of toxic chemicals, including prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products	172
<b>Chapter 20</b>	Environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes, including prevention of illegal international traffic in hazardous wastes	179
<b>Chapter 21</b>	Environmental sound management of solid wastes and sewage-related issues	184
<b>Chapter 22</b>	Safe and environmentally sound management of radioactive wastes	188

<b>Section III</b>	<b>Strengthening the Role of Major Groups</b>	
<b>Chapter 23</b>	Preamble	191
<b>Chapter 24</b>	Global action for women towards sustainable and equitable development	191
<b>Chapter 25</b>	Children and youth in sustainable development	193
<b>Chapter 26</b>	Recognizing and strengthening the role of indigenous people and their communities	196
<b>Chapter 27</b>	Strengthening the role of non-governmental organizations: partners for sustainable development	197
<b>Chapter 28</b>	Local authorities' initiatives in support of Agenda 21	200
<b>Chapter 29</b>	Strengthening the role of workers and their trade unions	200
<b>Chapter 30</b>	Strengthening the role of business and industry	201
<b>Chapter 31</b>	Scientific and technological community	205
<b>Chapter 32</b>	Strengthening the role of farmers	207

<b>Section IV</b>	<b>Means of Implementation</b>	
<b>Chapter 33</b>	Financial resources and mechanisms	209
<b>Chapter 34</b>	Transfer of environmentally sound technology, cooperation and capacity building	212
<b>Chapter 35</b>	Science for sustainable development	216
<b>Chapter 36</b>	Promoting education, public awareness and training	221
<b>Chapter 37</b>	National mechanisms and international cooperation for capacity-building	227
<b>Chapter 38</b>	International institutional arrangements	229
<b>Chapter 39</b>	International legal instruments and mechanisms	236
<b>Chapter 40</b>	Information for decision-making	237

# Introduction

**Boutros Boutros-Ghali**

In his opening address to the United Nations General Assembly in September 1992, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, UN Secretary-General, commented on the United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro earlier this year.

The Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in June marked an important milestone in awakening the world to the need for a development process that does not jeopardise future generations.

The Rio Conference achieved consensus in more than one area: first, it secured a set of agreements between governments which marks a significant advance in international cooperation on development and environment issues. Second, it marshalled political commitment to these arrangements at the highest level and placed the issue of sustainable development at the heart of the international agenda. Third, it opened new paths for communication and cooperation between official and non-official organisations working towards developmental and environmental goals. Fourth, it led to an enormous increase in public awareness of the issues that were tackled in the process – an awareness that ought to facilitate the adoption of policies and the allocation of additional resources to fulfil the task.

A comprehensive and far-reaching programme for sustainable development is Agenda 21 which constitutes the centrepiece of international cooperation and coordination activities within the United Nations system for many years to come. Its role in galvanising international cooperation will be crucial. Building on the spirit of Rio, the implementation of Agenda 21 must be seen as an investment in our future. I call on the donor community to ensure a flow of new resources which will serve the common interests of the whole world.

# Foreword

**Maurice Strong**

Maurice Strong, who was appointed Secretary-General to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1989, is the leading voice in international environmental and developmental concerns. In 1972 he was active in the organisation of the Stockholm Conference on Human Environment, the predecessor to the Earth Summit.

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro early this year offered a unique opportunity to establish the basis for the major shift required to put this planet on the path towards a more secure and sustainable future.

At the core of this shift there is a need for fundamental change. Change to our economic life, a more careful and more caring use of the Earth's resources and greater cooperation and equity in sharing the benefits as well as the risks of our technological civilization. Of particular importance is the need to integrate the ecological dimension into education and culture as well as in economics.

I will mention some of the major Earth Summit achievements:

- Agenda 21 – a comprehensive blueprint for the global actions to affect the transition to sustainable development;
- The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development – a series of principles defining the rights and responsibilities of States in this area;
- A set of principles to support the sustainable management of forests worldwide;
- Two legally binding conventions – aiming to prevent global climate change and the eradication of biologically diverse species – that were signed by representatives of more than 150 countries.

Of course, satisfaction over some of the Earth Summit achievements must be conditioned by what has not yet been achieved. We cannot ignore the reality that some of our goals have been weakened, that we need much stronger commitments on finance, that targets and timetables must be set for conventions to be effective. But overall, Agenda 21 constitutes the most comprehensive and far-reaching programme of action ever approved by the world community.

And the fact that their approval was at the highest political level lends it special authority and importance. For the first time in international politics we have consensus that the future of the planet is at stake if we do not reverse the process of abusing it.

The real measure of success will be in what happens now, after Rio, when government leaders and citizens alike have returned to their countries, to their organizations, to their immediate preoccupations. It is up to all of us to build on the foundations laid by the Earth Summit to ensure that the decisions that have been taken at the global level be translated into national politics and practices at all levels.

A new world order, as we move into the 21st century, must unite us all in a global partnership – which always recognizes and respects the transcending sovereignty of nature, of our only one Earth. We have to make sure that the road from Rio is a fast track, if we are to realise our hope that the United Nations Earth Summit really was a quantum leap forward on that road to sustainable development.

# The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

*The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, having met at Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992, reaffirming the Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, adopted at Stockholm on 16 June 1972, and seeking to build upon it, with the goal of establishing a new and equitable global partnership through the creation of new levels of cooperation among States, key sectors of societies and people, working towards international agreements which respect the interests of all and protect the integrity of the global environmental and developmental system, recognizing the integral and interdependent nature of the Earth, our home, proclaims that:*

**Principle 1** Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

**Principle 2** States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

**Principle 3** The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.

**Principle 4** In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.

**Principle 5** All States and all people shall cooperate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world.

**Principle 6** The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority. International actions in the field of environment and development should also address the interests and needs of all countries.

**Principle 7** States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command.

**Principle 8** To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies.

**Principle 9** States should cooperate to strengthen endogenous capacity-building for sustainable development by improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific and technological knowledge, and by enhancing the development, adaptation, diffusion and transfer of technologies, including new and innovative technologies.

**Principle 10** Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

**Principle 11** States shall enact effective environmental legislation. Environmental standards, management objectives and priorities should reflect the environmental and developmental context to which they apply. Standards applied by some countries may be inappropriate and of unwarranted economic and social cost to other countries, in particular developing countries.

**Principle 12** States should cooperate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, to better address the problems of environmental degradation. Trade policy measures for environmental purposes should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade. Unilateral actions to deal with environmental challenges outside the jurisdiction of the importing country should be avoided. Environmental measures addressing transboundary or global environmental problems should, as far as possible, be based on an international consensus.

**Principle 13** States shall develop national law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage. States shall also cooperate in an expeditious and more determined manner to develop further international law regarding liability and compensation for adverse effects of environmental damage caused by activities within their jurisdiction or control to areas beyond their jurisdiction.

**Principle 14** States should effectively cooperate to discourage or prevent the relocation and transfer to other States of any activities and substances that cause severe environmental degradation or are found to be harmful to human health.

**Principle 15** In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

**Principle 16** National authorities should endeavour to promote the internalization of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.

**Principle 17** Environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority.

**Principle 18** States shall immediately notify other States of any natural disasters or other emergencies that are likely to produce sudden harmful effects on the environment of those States. Every effort shall be made by the international community to help States so afflicted.

**Principle 19** States shall provide prior and timely notification and relevant information to potentially affected States on activities that may have a significant adverse transboundary environmental effect and shall consult with those States at an early stage and in good faith.

**Principle 20** Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.

**Principle 21** The creativity, ideals and courage of the youth of the world should be mobilized to forge a global partnership in order to achieve sustainable development and ensure a better future for all.

**Principle 22** Indigenous people and their communities, and other local communities, have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge and traditional practices. States should recognize and duly support their identity, culture and interest and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.

**Principle 23** The environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation shall be protected.

**Principle 24** Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development. States shall therefore respect international law providing protection for the environment in times of armed conflict and cooperate in its further development, as necessary.

**Principle 25** Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.

**Principle 26** States shall resolve all their environmental disputes peacefully and by appropriate means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

**Principle 27** States and people shall cooperate in good faith and in a spirit of partnership in the fulfilment of the principles embodied in this Declaration and in the further development of international law in the field of sustainable development.