

"The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development", "Introduction to Chapter 7" from *Agenda 21* (1992),¹ and the "Istanbul Declaration on Human Settlements"

United Nations

Editors' Introduction

The 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro – the "Earth Summit" – was like the Brundtland Commission a watershed event that helped alert the global media and the public to the need for sustainable development. This conference, attended by leaders of 178 nations, produced a lengthy declaration known as *Agenda 21* that laid out sustainable development principles in many different areas. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development below summarizes some of its major themes. The Earth Summit also led to the creation of a United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development which meets annually to review international implementation efforts, and a UN Division for Sustainable Development to co-ordinate the agency's work in this field. More information on the latter is available at www.un.org/esa/sustdev.

Chapter 7 of *Agenda 21* laid out directions for sustainable urban development, and, at the urging of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) such as the International Council on Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), Chapter 28 on implementation stipulates that "by 1996, most local authorities in each country should have undertaken a consultative process with their population and achieved a consensus on a local Agenda 21 for the(ir) communities." This mandate for "Local Agenda 21" planning has stimulated a large number of local planning initiatives, especially in the United Kingdom, northern Europe, and a number of developing nations.

The Earth Summit was followed in the early and mid-1990s by other United Nations conferences on global population, social development, women, and urban development. The 1996 Habitat II "City Summit," held in Istanbul, produced a lengthy consensus document on urban development principles, and perhaps just as importantly featured a huge exhibition of global best practices in sustainable city-building. The 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa, sought to review global progress in the ten years following the Rio Conference. Largely ignored by the US administration of George W. Bush, which successfully persuaded delegates to avoid specific timetables for change, this event nonetheless produced some additional financial commitments to sustainable development programs from a number of European nations and the European Union.

Despite optimistic rhetoric from some agencies, international declarations such as *Agenda 21* have often been downplayed or ignored by national governments. It is debatable to what extent the UN treaties, conferences, and declarations represent an important global process of education, consensus-building, and action, and to what extent they are ineffectual gestures or window-dressing for the status quo. Some might argue that the global trade institutions set up during the 1990s, such as the World Trade Organization, represent a second, more powerful global governance mechanism entirely bypassing the United Nations – one promoting the economic goals of powerful nations at the expense of sustainable development for all countries. However, it is clear that the Earth Summit and other UN-related events have indeed played at least some role in promoting global debates about sustainability, and, even if ignored by nations such as the USA in the short term, have helped lay the groundwork for international action in the long run.

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 1972,² 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 center 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 endeavor 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 interests 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 inter-

national 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 fulfillment of the principles embodied in this Declaration and in the further development of international law in the field of sustainable development.

CHAPTER 7 OF AGENDA 21 (EXCERPT FROM INTRODUCTION)

Promoting sustainable human settlement development

7.1. In industrialized countries, the consumption patterns of cities are severely stressing the global ecosystem, while settlements in the developing world need more raw material, energy, and economic development simply to overcome basic economic and social problems. Human settlement conditions in many parts of the world, particularly the developing countries, are deteriorating mainly as a result of the low levels of investment in the sector attributable to the overall resource constraints in these countries. In the low-income countries for which recent data are available, an average of only 5.6 per cent of central government expenditure went to housing, amenities, social security and welfare. Expenditure by international support and finance organizations is equally low. For example, only 1 per cent of the United Nations

system's total grant-financed expenditures in 1988 went to human settlements, while in 1991, loans from the World Bank and the International Development Association (IDA) for urban development and water supply and sewerage amounted to 5.5 and 5.4 per cent, respectively, of their total lending.

7.2. On the other hand, available information indicates that technical cooperation activities in the human settlement sector generate considerable public and private sector investment. For example, every dollar of UNDP technical cooperation expenditure on human settlements in 1988 generated a follow-up investment of \$122, the highest of all UNDP sectors of assistance.

7.3. This is the foundation of the "enabling approach" advocated for the human settlement sector. External assistance will help to generate the internal resources needed to improve the living and working environments of all people by the year 2000 and beyond, including the growing number of unemployed – the no-income group. At the same time the environmental implications of urban development should be recognized and addressed in an integrated fashion by all countries, with high priority being given to the needs of the urban and rural poor, the unemployed and the growing number of people without any source of income.

Human settlement objective

7.4. The overall human settlement objective is to improve the social, economic and environmental quality of human settlements and the living and working environments of all people, in particular the urban and rural poor. Such improvement should be based on technical cooperation activities, partnerships among the public, private and community sectors and participation in the decision-making process by community groups and special interest groups such as women, indigenous people, the elderly and the disabled. These approaches should form the core principles of national settlement strategies. In developing these strategies, countries will need to set priorities among the eight programme areas in this chapter in accordance with their national plans and objectives, taking fully into account their social and cultural capabilities. Furthermore, countries should make appropriate

provision to monitor the impact of their strategies on marginalized and disenfranchised groups, with particular reference to the needs of women.

7.5. The programme areas included in this chapter are:

- (a) Providing adequate shelter for all.
- (b) Improving human settlement management.
- (c) Promoting sustainable land-use planning and management.
- (d) Promoting the integrated provision of environmental infrastructure: water, sanitation, drainage and solid-waste management.
- (e) Promoting sustainable energy and transport systems in human settlements.
- (f) Promoting human settlement planning and management in disaster-prone areas.
- (g) Promoting sustainable construction industry activities.
- (h) Promoting human resource development and capacity-building for human settlement development.

THE "ISTANBUL DECLARATION ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS"

1. We, the Heads of State or Government and the official delegations of countries assembled at the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) in Istanbul, Turkey from 3 to 14 June 1996, take this opportunity to endorse the universal goals of ensuring adequate shelter for all and making human settlements safer, healthier and more liveable, equitable, sustainable and productive. Our deliberations on the two major themes of the Conference – adequate shelter for all and sustainable human settlements development in an urbanizing world – have been inspired by the Charter of the United Nations and are aimed at reaffirming existing and forging new partnerships for action at the international, national and local levels to improve our living environment. We commit ourselves to the objectives, principles and recommendations contained in the Habitat Agenda and pledge our mutual support for its implementation.

2. We have considered, with a sense of urgency, the continuing deterioration of conditions of shelter and human settlements. At the same time, we

recognize cities and towns as centres of civilization, generating economic development and social, cultural, spiritual and scientific advancement. We must take advantage of the opportunities presented by our settlements and preserve their diversity to promote solidarity among all our peoples.

3. We reaffirm our commitment to better standards of living in larger freedom for all humankind. We recall the first United Nations Conference on Human Settlements, held at Vancouver, Canada, the celebration of the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless and the Global Strategy for Shelter to the Year 2000, all of which have contributed to increased global awareness of the problems of human settlements and called for action to achieve adequate shelter for all. Recent United Nations world conferences, including, in particular, the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, have given us a comprehensive agenda for the equitable attainment of peace, justice and democracy built on economic development, social development and environmental protection as interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development. We have sought to integrate the outcomes of these conferences into the Habitat Agenda.

4. To improve the quality of life within human settlements, we must combat the deterioration of conditions that in most cases, particularly in developing countries, have reached crisis proportions. To this end, we must address comprehensively, inter alia, unsustainable consumption and production patterns, particularly in industrialized countries; unsustainable population changes, including changes in structure and distribution, giving priority consideration to the tendency towards excessive population concentration; homelessness; increasing poverty; unemployment; social exclusion; family instability; inadequate resources; lack of basic infrastructure and services; lack of adequate planning; growing insecurity and violence; environmental degradation; and increased vulnerability to disasters.

5. The challenges of human settlements are global, but countries and regions also face specific problems which need specific solutions. We recognize the need to intensify our efforts and cooperation

to improve living conditions in the cities, towns and villages throughout the world, particularly in developing countries, where the situation is especially grave, and in countries with economies in transition. In this connection, we acknowledge that globalization of the world economy presents opportunities and challenges for the development process, as well as risks and uncertainties, and that achievement of the goals of the Habitat Agenda would be facilitated by, *inter alia*, positive actions on the issues of financing of development, external debt, international trade and transfer of technology. Our cities must be places where human beings lead fulfilling lives in dignity, good health, safety, happiness and hope.

6. Rural and urban development are interdependent. In addition to improving the urban habitat, we must also work to extend adequate infrastructure, public services and employment opportunities to rural areas in order to enhance their attractiveness, develop an integrated network of settlements and minimize rural-to-urban migration. Small- and medium-sized towns need special focus.

7. As human beings are at the centre of our concern for sustainable development, they are the basis for our actions as in implementing the Habitat Agenda. We recognize the particular needs of women, children and youth for safe, healthy and secure living conditions. We shall intensify our efforts to eradicate poverty and discrimination, to promote and protect all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, and to provide for basic needs, such as education, nutrition and life-span health care services, and, especially, adequate shelter for all. To this end, we commit ourselves to improving the living conditions in human settlements in ways that are consonant with local needs and realities, and we acknowledge the need to address the global, economic, social and environmental trends to ensure the creation of better living environments for all people. We shall also ensure the full and equal participation of all women and men, and the effective participation of youth, in political, economic and social life. We shall promote full accessibility for people with disabilities, as well as gender equality in policies, programmes and projects for shelter and sustainable human settlements development. We make these commitments

with particular reference to the more than one billion people living in absolute poverty and to the members of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups identified in the Habitat Agenda.

8. We reaffirm our commitment to the full and progressive realization of the right to adequate housing as provided for in international instruments. To that end, we shall seek the active participation of our public, private and non-governmental partners at all levels to ensure legal security of tenure, protection from discrimination and equal access to affordable, adequate housing for all persons and their families.

9. We shall work to expand the supply of affordable housing by enabling markets to perform efficiently and in a socially and environmentally responsible manner, enhancing access to land and credit and assisting those who are unable to participate in housing markets.

10. In order to sustain our global environment and improve the quality of living in our human settlements, we commit ourselves to sustainable patterns of production, consumption, transportation and settlements development; pollution prevention; respect for the carrying capacity of ecosystems; and the preservation of opportunities for future generations. In this connection, we 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 different contributions to global environmental degradation, we reaffirm the principle that countries have common but differentiated responsibilities. We also recognize that we must take these actions in a manner consistent with the precautionary principle approach, which shall be widely applied according to the capabilities of countries. We shall also promote healthy living environments, especially through the provision of adequate quantities of safe water and effective management of waste.

11. We shall promote the conservation, rehabilitation and maintenance of buildings, monuments, open spaces, landscapes and settlement patterns of historical, cultural, architectural, natural, religious and spiritual value.

12. We adopt the enabling strategy and the principles of partnership and participation as the most democratic and effective approach for the realization of our commitments. Recognizing local authorities as our closest partners, and as essential, in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, we must, within the legal framework of each country, promote decentralization through democratic local authorities and work to strengthen their financial and institutional capacities in accordance with the conditions of countries, while ensuring their transparency, accountability and responsiveness to the needs of people, which are key requirements for Governments at all levels. We shall also increase our cooperation with parliamentarians, the private sector, labour unions and non-governmental and other civil society organizations with due respect for their autonomy. We shall also enhance the role of women and encourage socially and environmentally responsible corporate investment by the private sector. Local action should be guided and stimulated through local programmes based on *Agenda 21*, the Habitat Agenda, or any other equivalent programme, as well as drawing upon the experience of worldwide cooperation initiated in Istanbul by the World Assembly of Cities and Local Authorities, without prejudice to national policies, objectives, priorities and programmes. The enabling strategy includes a responsibility for Governments to implement special measures for members of disadvantaged and vulnerable groups when appropriate.

13. As the implementation of the Habitat Agenda will require adequate funding, we must mobilize financial resources at the national and international levels, including new and additional resources from all sources – multilateral and bilateral, public and private. In this connection, we must facilitate capacity-building and promote the transfer of appropriate technology and know-how. Furthermore, we reiterate the commitments set out in

recent United Nations conferences, especially those in *Agenda 21* on funding and technology transfer.

14. We believe that the full and effective implementation of the Habitat Agenda will require the strengthening of the role and functions of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), taking into account the need for the Centre to focus on well-defined and thoroughly developed objectives and strategic issues. To this end, we pledge our support for the successful implementation of the Habitat Agenda and its global plan of action. Regarding the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, we fully recognize the contribution of the regional and national action plans prepared for this Conference.

15. This Conference in Istanbul marks a new era of cooperation, an era of a culture of solidarity. As we move into the twenty-first century, we offer a positive vision of sustainable human settlements, a sense of hope for our common future and an exhortation to join a truly worthwhile and engaging challenge, that of building together a world where everyone can live in a safe home with the promise of a decent life of dignity, good health, safety, happiness and hope.

NOTES

- 1 New York: United Nations. 1992. (Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992, Annex I; adopted by more than 178 governments.) Available at <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/agenda21text.htm>.
- 2 Report of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, Stockholm, 5–16 June 1972 (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.73.II.A.14 and corrigendum), ch. I.

