

**MAKING PARTICIPATION WORK:
LESSONS FROM CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT IN THE WSSD**

A Report By

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
SECTION I: INTRODUCTION.....	5
OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT	5
METHODOLOGY	6
SECTION II: WSSD – THE OFFICIAL STORY	7
THE OUTCOMES OF JOHANNESBURG: ITS SUCCESSES AND FAILURES	10
<i>Successes In Johannesburg.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>Partnerships: A Way Forward?</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Failures of the WSSD.....</i>	<i>13</i>
THE POLITICS OF JOHANNESBURG.....	14
SECTION III: CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE WSSD	16
JOHANNESBURG SHORTCOMINGS	16
<i>An Experience of Fragmentation and Isolation</i>	<i>16</i>
<i>Civil Society and the Official Process.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>The Diverse Agendas of Global Civil Society.....</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>Inadequate Mechanisms for Participation.....</i>	<i>19</i>
SUCCESS STORIES: CIVIL SOCIETY AND SPECIFIC ISSUES	20
<i>Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management.....</i>	<i>21</i>
<i>Indigenous Peoples in the WSSD.....</i>	<i>22</i>
<i>The Partnership for Principle 10.....</i>	<i>23</i>
SUCCESS STORIES: IMPACT ON NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES	24
<i>The Brazilian NGOs</i>	<i>24</i>
<i>Civil Society Groups from China.....</i>	<i>26</i>
<i>The Arab Environmental Caucus.....</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>The United States Environmental Justice Movement.....</i>	<i>27</i>
WSSD'S IMPACT ON INDONESIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY	29
CIVIL SOCIETY PARALLEL PROCESSES: A MIXED RESULT	30
THE CHALLENGE AHEAD: FINDING STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY	32
SECTION IV: MAKING PARTICIPATION WORK – LESSONS FROM THE WSSD	33
LESSONS FROM THE SUCCESSES	33
LESSONS FROM THE SHORTCOMINGS	35
<i>Reforming Mechanisms for Participation.....</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>The Question of Representation</i>	<i>35</i>
<i>Multi-Stakeholder Processes</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>Rethinking Parallel Process</i>	<i>38</i>
SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS	41
ANNEX A: THE IMPACT OF THE WSSD ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN INDONESIA AND SOUTH AFRICA – A CLOSER LOOK	43
INDONESIAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE WSSD.....	43
<i>Civil Society Internal Weakness and Problems.....</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>The Disruption of Moving to Bali</i>	<i>44</i>
<i>Civil Society Impact on WSSD Outcomes: Two Examples</i>	<i>45</i>
<i>The Larger Successes of WSSD.....</i>	<i>46</i>
<i>Post-Johannesburg: Building the Momentum.....</i>	<i>46</i>
SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE WSSD	47
<i>The Political Context.....</i>	<i>48</i>
<i>The Impact of WSSD on the Water Debate in South Africa.....</i>	<i>50</i>
<i>The Impact of the WSSD on South African Civil Society Movements.....</i>	<i>51</i>

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report assesses the engagement and participation of global civil society in the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 2002. It reviews the official outcomes of the WSSD and identifies those areas where civil society participation made a difference. The authors emphasize the lessons learned and make recommendations for improved strategies for future global sustainable development processes.

THE OUTCOMES OF THE WSSD

The WSSD was called to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development and assess the progress made one decade on from the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio. It was much more than just a discourse on sustainable development. It reflected and fed back into on-going consultations and negotiations on a wide-ranging set of issues, from trade and development financing, to climate change and biodiversity, to peace and human rights.

Two official documents emerged as principal outcomes from the WSSD: the *WSSD Plan of Implementation* and the *Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*. Together these were intended to frame the official approach to sustainable development in the foreseeable future. In addition to these documents, the many partnerships launched in Johannesburg represent a third important outcome of the Summit.

It is still too early to judge whether or not the WSSD succeeded in advancing sustainable development. The Summit's ultimate success will rest on how governments and other stakeholders implement the commitments made and the partnerships launched there. An analysis of the *Plan of Implementation*, however, shows that the official outcomes were, at best, a mix of successes and failures. Some important results did emerge—the target to cut in half the number of people without access to sanitation and clean water by 2015, for example—that could be a catalyst for sustainable development worldwide. But a summit like this takes place only once every decade, and its failure to negotiate a path forward for many of the critical sustainable development challenges facing the global community today—such as climate change and globalization—is clearly a missed opportunity.

CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE WSSD

For civil society, participating in the WSSD was a mixed experience: There was frustration and disappointment in both the process and the official outcomes. Civil society groups reported a sense of isolation due to inadequacies in the participation process. They also suffered from a certain fragmentation stemming from the very diversity of civil society groups in attendance.

But there were also successes. Civil society groups did manage to influence some specific outcomes at the Summit, and they were also influential at the national and regional levels. Perhaps more importantly, they were able to build significant alliances, coalitions, and networks on sustainable development.

In this report, particular attention is given to the experiences of:

- The Global Caucus on Community Based Forest Management;
- The Indigenous Peoples' Caucus;
- The Access Initiative;
- Brazilian NGOs;
- Civil society groups from China;
- The Arab Environmental Caucus; and,
- The environmental justice movement.

These organizations proved that many stakeholder groups are ahead of governments in building a sustainable development movement on the ground.

For most of these groups, success at the WSSD was measured not so much by how they influenced the official documents, but by the lessons they learned in the process, the networks and alliances they formed, and the organizational capacity they built to influence governments and intergovernmental processes in the future. *For them, the WSSD became an effective vehicle of education; political organization and mobilization; local, national, and international coalition building; and engagement with their respective governments, even if that engagement was confrontational.*

In this sense, as irrelevant as the official outcomes of WSSD might seem to the real world, the Johannesburg Summit became a truly empowering experience for civil society groups. *For these groups, the crucial outcomes therefore are not what they achieved in the official process. More important by far is what they brought back from it—back to their national arenas where decisions on environment and development are being made every day. And back to other global processes, such as on-going trade talks in the World Trade Organization, or negotiations on the UN Convention on Climate Change, where legally binding decisions and commitments are being forged.*

In this report, particular attention is also given to the experience of Indonesian and South African civil society. Because preparatory meetings (PrepComs) and the Summit events themselves took place in these countries, the WSSD had a profound impact on civil society groups there, particularly on their internal dynamics and their relations with their respective governments. In both countries, in different ways, civil society was empowered by the WSSD processes with one clear lesson emerging: *Civil society organizations can achieve reforms if their goals coincide with national issues and priorities. Sustainable development is more likely to occur from work that starts at a local level and progresses to the national, regional, and eventually the global stage.*

SHORTCOMINGS IN PARTICIPATION

For civil society, participation in the WSSD was handicapped by weakly defined structures and still-emerging cultures of collaboration. These limitations are illustrated in the official participation mechanisms that the UN put in place for the WSSD: the so-called Major Groups concept and the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues (MSDs). In both cases, the issues of representation and transparency were critical: *Who represents which interests? Which individual or organization can speak for everyone? How can consensus be arrived at when there is so much diversity among civil society?* Given the difficulties these issues pose, there is a real question whether the official participation mechanisms available are useful enough to pursue: *Do these dialogues yield enough benefits to justify the energy and resources expended to make them work? Do they really make a difference in the decisions that ultimately result? Are they taken seriously by governments?*

A second shortcoming in civil society participation—and an urgent priority for change—was the manner of the large “parallel processes”—events organized by civil society groups to coincide with the official government Summit events. Parallel events such as the *Global People’s Forum* in Johannesburg, have become a staple at many major UN summits, since civil society groups have only limited access to the official government meetings. But these parallel events—particularly the more large-scale gatherings—can only be effective when supported by extensive preparation. Issues of representation and transparency must be resolved early, and there must be a clear linkage, in terms of agenda and process, to the official meetings. Without these conditions, such processes can become a distraction, detracting from efforts to influence the official process, and fragmenting civil society’s input.

At Johannesburg, parallel events which were more limited in scope had a strong strategic focus, or were intended primarily as organizational vehicles for a specific cause—events such as the *Kimberley Summit of Indigenous People* and the *Week of the Landless*—were more successful. Their political objectives were clear and their participants had a common agenda and generally shared a mutual analytical framework on sustainable development issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To increase the effectiveness of their participation in future intergovernmental processes, civil society groups should:

- *Start their preparations early* at all levels and remain consistently involved as the process evolves;
- *Make an explicit decision to influence governments* and/or to use the opportunity provided by the process to organize, build their capacity, and learn lessons that can be brought back to national or other global forums;
- *Develop strong logistics* related to communications, event venues, accommodations, and transportation;

- *Resolve representation and transparency issues* within and among groups in order to ensure coherence and avoid fragmentation, isolation, and distraction;
- *Engage strategically with the media* to amplify their successes;
- *Continue to invest in multi-stakeholder processes* that intersect with official processes to improve their structure and focus their deliberations on useful outcomes;
- *Rethink the concept of parallel processes*, including the concept of parallel civil society documents (documents meant as a counterpoint to official government documents);
- *Strengthen communication and collaboration* with negotiating blocks such as the G-77 countries and the European Union to increase civil society participation at the multilateral level;
- *Match civil society goals to coincide with national issues and priorities*, working at a local stage and progressing to national, regional, and eventually the global stages; and,
- *Develop a follow-up strategy* at the global, regional, national, and sectoral levels to maximize gains after the event.

SECTION I: INTRODUCTION

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), convened in August 2002 in Johannesburg, South Africa, should not be looked upon as the final frozen frame of a race, with the Summit as the finish line. Rather, it was an extended global process—one with significant consequences for the environment and development debates. To understand its outcomes and the opportunities it created, we need to examine the winding route toward the Summit, the many branches leading from it, and above all, the path forward. At the same time, we must acknowledge that the sustainable development discourse that WSSD sparked is only one refrain in a larger global discussion on such topics as trade, debt relief, financing for development, water, climate change, biodiversity, peace, human rights, and many other topics critical to a better and more just world.

For this reason, it is imperative that civil society learns the lessons of its participation in the WSSD process. Moving forward on sustainable development means engaging effectively in all dimensions of this wider discussion. And that requires that civil society groups improve their capacity to participate meaningfully and as equal partners with governments, businesses, and other stakeholders.

OBJECTIVES OF THE REPORT

This report assesses the successes and shortcomings of global civil society's participation in the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg, South Africa. It reviews the official outcomes of this important intergovernmental process and identifies those areas where civil society participation made a difference. More importantly, the report identifies lessons learned from civil society engagement in the process and makes recommendations for improving future participation in the global sustainable development debate.

The report seeks to answer the following questions:

- How adequate were the mechanisms in the official process for participation? In particular, did the mechanisms of the “Major Groups” and the “Multi-stakeholder processes” succeed in maximizing civil society engagement and participation?
- In what areas did civil society groups succeed in influencing the official outcomes of the WSSD, and what were the reasons for these successes? Why did some civil society caucuses or groups have more impact than others, and what strategies did they employ? Can these be replicated in other fora and processes?
- What were the “failures” – the shortcomings – in effective participation, and the reasons for them? How can they be avoided in the future?

- What lessons can we learn from the particular experiences of Indonesian and South African civil society groups? Can the civil society of countries that host similar global processes learn from their experiences?
- What do we need to do to improve civil society engagement and participation in future global sustainable development processes?

METHODOLOGY

In undertaking the assessment, the authors reviewed official documents, media articles, personal accounts by individuals active in the WSSD process, declarations, and reports produced by intergovernmental agencies, governments, research institutions, and civil society organizations. We relied on both documentary and on-line sources and interviewed more than 60 individuals from all over the world, a majority of who were grantees of the Ford Foundation who had participated in the various WSSD processes. Because most of the authors were involved in these processes as well, they also relied on their own experiences and insights in generating the findings and recommendations in this report.

The impact of the WSSD on civil society in Indonesia and South Africa is complex and deserves to be studied separately. For this purpose, two studies were commissioned by the Ford Foundation in 2003. A summary of these studies' findings are presented in *Annex A*.

The preparation of this report was supported by a grant from the Ford Foundation. Early in 2002, the Foundation decided to invest a considerable amount of its funds to support civil society participation in the WSSD. Among others, it supported the activities of the Indonesian People's Forum and the Civil Society Secretariat, the host of the Global People's Forum in South Africa. In addition, Foundation support allowed hundreds of civil society representatives from all regions of the world to participate in the Summit. Many of these representatives came from rural and other grassroots communities: indigenous peoples, community forest advocates, landless peoples, farmers, urban activists, environmental justice advocates, and NGO leaders. This unprecedented diversity of participants in a global process made this effort to assess civil society participation in the WSSD challenging, but ultimately, because of the lessons learned, rewarding.

SECTION II: WSSD – THE OFFICIAL STORY

“The Earth Summit in Rio was about changing the way people think about development and the environment... Johannesburg is about changing the way we act. It’s about implementation.”

-- Nitin Desai, Summit Secretary-General¹

From August 26 to September 4, 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development convened at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa.² One of the Summit’s major tasks was to assess the world’s progress 10 years after the historic Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. At a more fundamental level, the Summit was called to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development, building on 30 years of international activity on environment and development. In attendance at the Summit were 82 heads of state, 30 vice-presidents and deputy prime ministers, 74 ministers, and numerous royalty. These dignitaries came together with thousands of official government representatives and observers from civil society, academia, the scientific community, local communities, and the private sector.

The ‘official’ summit at Johannesburg consisted of a number of discrete elements: seven thematic Partnership Plenaries, statements by various non-state entities, four high-level Round Tables, addresses by heads of state and other senior officials, and a Multi-Stakeholder event. An intergovernmental negotiating process to arrive at a consensus agreement on a *Plan of Implementation* and a Declaration on Sustainable Development, to be signed by heads of state, ran in parallel with these events. Although these negotiations had begun in early 2001 with the first of four PrepComs, final agreement was left to a high-level negotiating session held over the last three days of the Summit. In the end, governments succeeded in adopting the *WSSD Plan of Implementation*³ and the *Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*,⁴ which are intended to frame the official approach to sustainable development in the foreseeable future. These two documents, together with the many partnerships launched in Johannesburg (See Box 1), are the principal outcomes of the WSSD.

Box 1 WSSD Outcomes

The Earth Summit held in Rio in 1992 produced four major environmental treaties and Agenda 21, the international blueprint for sustainable development. In contrast, the WSSD was never intended to develop new conventions or to renegotiate Agenda 21. Rather, the WSSD was given the mandate of implementing existing promises and commitments made in Rio and in the more recent Millennium Development Goals. The Summit, however, did produce the following set of three major outcomes:

- **The Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development:** Governments reaffirmed their commitment to sustainable development and committed themselves to build a humane, equitable, and caring global society cognizant of the need for human dignity for all. They reaffirmed their commitment to implement the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21 and acknowledged that eradicating poverty, changing consumption and production patterns, and protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development are the overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development. Governments also recognized that globalization has added a new dimension to the challenge of sustainable development. They acknowledged that while globalization has presented new opportunities to pursue sustainable development, its benefits and costs are unevenly distributed and developing countries face special difficulties in meeting its challenges. The Johannesburg Declaration calls for broad-based participation by civil society in policy formulation, decision-making, and implementation at all levels. It also calls for governments to seek partnerships with all Major Groups, to foster corporate accountability, and to demand improvements in multilateral institutions to make them more democratic and accountable.
- **The WSSD Plan of Implementation:** The Plan sets out in detail the actions that need to be taken to advance sustainable development. The titles of its 11 principal sections indicate the document's broad reach: Poverty Eradication; Changing Unsustainable Patterns of Consumption and Production; Protecting and Managing the Natural Resource Base of Economic and Social Development; Sustainable Development in a Globalizing World; Health and Sustainable Development; Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States; Sustainable Development for Africa; Other Regional Initiatives; Means of Implementation; and, the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development. On some specific issues, time-bound targets were incorporated in the Plan. The *Plan of Implementation* is a political document and therefore is not legally binding on governments. However, it is designed to guide development, financial, and investment decisions by governments, international organizations, and other stakeholders.
- **Partnerships.** Established by governments and other stakeholders, the many partnerships launched at Johannesburg are considered major outcomes of the WSSD. These partnerships are supposed to complement the WSSD implementation plan, help translate the commitments into action, and enable all stakeholders to make a concrete contribution to achieving sustainable development.

Source: www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/basic_info/faqs_post_summit.html

The WSSD created a myriad of expectations: of the successes the Summit could hope to achieve or the failures it was doomed to repeat; of what issues the Summit should tackle and which issues were best left to other arenas; of the role of parallel processes and partnerships in comparison to official negotiations and government commitments. Framing all these hopes and fears was one overarching question: could the international community find a common agenda and vision for sustainable development to truly deal with the challenges of poverty and environment?

Whatever the expectation of civil society groups, positive or negative, their focus was squarely on the need for clarity of commitments, and of a plan for implementing these

commitments. As Box 2 shows, this focus on commitments manifested in the inclusion of a number of time-bound targets in the *Plan of Implementation*.

Box 2 TIME-BOUND TARGETS IN THE WSSD PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

Among the most significant elements of the *Plan of Implementation* are the time-bound targets that governments have agreed to achieve. Some of these targets were new, but many were simple reaffirmations of previously agreed upon commitments (e.g., the UN Millennium Development Goals).⁵

By 2003:

- So that the Rotterdam Convention can come into force, promote the ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments on chemicals and hazardous waste; and,
- Facilitate implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer by ensuring adequate replenishment of its fund (by 2003/2005).

By 2004:

- So that the Stockholm Convention can come into force, promote the ratification and implementation of relevant international instruments on chemicals and hazardous waste;
- Establish a regular process under the United Nations for global reporting and assessment of the state of the marine environment;
- Put into effect the FAO international plan of action to deter and eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing;
- Undertake initiatives aimed at implementing the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities to reduce, prevent, and control waste and pollution and their health-related impacts;
- Develop community-based initiatives on sustainable tourism;
- Support the availability of adequate, affordable, and environmentally sound energy services for the sustainable development of Small Island Developing States, including through strengthening efforts on energy supply and services; and,
- Review implementation of the Barbados Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States.

By 2005:

- Further develop a strategic approach to international chemicals management, based on the Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action beyond 2000;
- Develop integrated water resources management and water efficiency plans;
- Put into effect the FAO international plan of action for the management of fishing capacity;
- Accelerate implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action by countries and by the Collaborative Partnership on Forests, and intensify efforts on reporting to the United Nations Forum on Forests, to contribute to an assessment of progress;
- Support African countries in developing and implementing food security strategies;
- Reduce HIV prevalence among young men and women aged 15-24 by 25 percent in the most affected countries;
- Take immediate steps to make progress in the formulation and elaboration of national strategies for sustainable development and begin their implementation;
- Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education; and,
- Recommend to the U.N. General Assembly that it consider adopting a Decade of Education for sustainable development.

Box 2 TIME-BOUND TARGETS IN THE WSSD PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION

By 2008:

- Encourage countries to implement the new globally harmonized system for the classification and labelling of chemicals as soon as possible, with a view to having the system fully operational.

By 2010:

- Encourage the application of the ecosystem approach for the sustainable development of the oceans;
- Enhance health education with the objective of achieving improved health literacy on a global basis;
- Improve access of developing countries to alternatives to ozone-depleting substances, and assist them in complying with the phase-out schedule under the Montreal Protocol;
- Achieve a significant reduction in the current rate of loss of biological diversity; and,
- Reduce HIV prevalence among young men and women aged 15-24 by 25 percent globally, as well as combat malaria, tuberculosis, and other diseases.

By 2012:

- Develop and facilitate the use of diverse approaches and tools, including the ecosystem approach, the elimination of destructive fishing practices, and the establishment of marine protected areas consistent with international law and based on scientific information, including representative networks.

By 2015:

- Halve the proportion of the world's people: without access to safe drinking water; in poverty; whose income is less than \$1 a day; who suffer from hunger; and who do not have access to basic sanitation;
- On an urgent basis and where possible, maintain or restore depleted fish stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield;
- Reduce mortality rates for infants and children under five by two thirds, and maternal mortality rates by three quarters, of the prevailing rate in 2000;
- Halve the proportion of people who suffer from hunger; and,
- Ensure that all children will be able to complete a full course of primary schooling and that girls and boys will have equal access to all levels of education relevant to national needs.

By 2020:

- Achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum dwellers; and,
- Aim to use and produce chemicals in ways that do not lead to significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.

THE OUTCOMES OF JOHANNESBURG: ITS SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

“This *Plan of Implementation* provides us with everything we need to make sustainable development happen over the next several years.... The test is whether governments, along with civil society and the private sector, can pursue the commitments that are in the document, and take actions that achieve measurable results.”

-- Nitin Desai, Secretary-General, Johannesburg Summit⁶

It is still too early to judge whether or not the WSSD succeeded in reinvigorating the global commitment to sustainable development. Ultimately, its success will depend on how governments and other stakeholders implement the commitments made and the

partnerships launched. However, based on an analysis of the *Plan of Implementation*, it is clear that the outcomes of the official summit were, at best, a mix of successes and failures.⁷ The WSSD did achieve some important outcomes that could be a catalyst for sustainable development worldwide. But a summit like this takes place only once every decade, and its failure to negotiate a path forward for many of the critical sustainable development challenges facing the global community today—such as climate change and globalization—is clearly a missed opportunity.

Successes In Johannesburg

The successful outcomes of the WSSD are found in key elements of the *Plan of Implementation*, as well as in the partnerships and sustainable development initiatives launched in Johannesburg.

The Sanitation Target. The most concrete and important success of the WSSD was the adoption of a new basic sanitation target. The target sets a goal of cutting in half the percentage of people without access to safe, affordable drinking water or basic sanitation by 2015. Achieving this goal would not be a trivial outcome. Though the required investment⁸ in effort and capital will be great, many delegates acknowledge that the target is clearly achievable. All agree that reaching this target would make an enormous difference in the lives of millions of the world's poor. Nearly two million people die each year from diseases linked to a lack of clean water and basic sanitation services.⁹

Delinking Economic Growth and Environmental Degradation. The *Plan of Implementation* encourages the development of a 10-year framework of programs to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production. These programs might range from greater use of life-cycle analysis of products, to the development of consumer awareness programs, to the promotion of eco-efficient manufacturing, and to the transfer of eco-friendly technology. Although the text is quite weak, with many qualifications and reservations inserted by governments, the acceptance of the idea that economic growth must be divorced from environmental degradation represents an important forward step.

Reaffirmation of Principle 10. The *Plan of Implementation* reaffirms Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, which calls for public access at the national level to environmental information; access to public participation in decision making; and, public access to judicial and administrative proceedings in environmental matters. In addition to the inclusion of these “Access Principles” in the *Plan of Implementation*, a coalition of civil society organizations, governments, and international organizations launched a voluntary partnership, called the Partnership for Principle 10 (PP10). It provides a vehicle for joint government/civil society efforts to identify priorities for policy reform that will deliver information to citizens, open up participatory processes, and ensure that citizens have the opportunity to seek redress or remedy when these rights are violated. This partnership received wide support at the Summit—an example of how civil society organizations can mobilize to promote sustainable development when governments are constrained.

The Rights of Communities and Indigenous Peoples. The *Plan of Implementation* provided an unequivocal recognition of the importance of community-based natural resource management, including a reaffirmation of the vital role of Indigenous Peoples in sustainable development. Governments affirmed the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities to participate in decision-making in areas as diverse as renewable energy, biodiversity, disaster impact mitigation, forest management, mining, and tourism.

The Importance of Ethics. The acknowledgement of the importance of ethics for sustainable development marks the first time that an explicit reference to ethics has been made in any official U.N. environment or development document and thus broke new ground. Although neither the *Plan of Implementation*, nor the *Political Declaration*, makes a reference to the Earth Charter, the incorporation of ethics into the sustainable development agenda provided an opening to those who believe that development and environment issues cannot be dealt with adequately unless governments and communities acknowledge the critical role of ethical norms in policymaking.

Corporate Responsibility and Accountability. Although falling short of the NGO demand for a binding convention on corporate accountability and liability,¹⁰ the decision to promote corporate responsibility and accountability based on the Rio principles was an important step forward. The wording contained in the *Plan of Implementation* leaves open the possibility of a future intergovernmental process that could result in an international regulatory framework for corporations.

Partnerships: A Way Forward?

One of the Summit's most significant outcomes was the recognition of the value of voluntary partnerships among governments and stakeholders such as NGOs and businesses—so-called “Type II” partnerships. (“Type I” partnerships are formalized political or legal agreements among governments, negotiated through the intergovernmental process.) “Type II” partnerships have been a *de facto* implementing mechanism for sustainable development for years, but this was the first time governments officially recognized them in a major international forum. This new development highlights a transition from traditional multilateral diplomacy to a voluntary implementation approach. In many ways, the need for partnerships is emblematic of the stagnation at the heart of multilateral negotiations. In the absence of robust and binding international commitments by governments, civil society, business, international organizations, and even some governments have united to fill in the gap and make sustainable development happen. Although the “Type II” partnerships proved controversial (see Box 3), several important new initiatives were launched in Johannesburg.¹¹ Aside from the *Partnership for Principle 10*, partnerships on sustainable agriculture, water and sanitation, and renewable energy were among the prominent initiatives highlighted at the Summit.

Box 3: The Controversy over Partnerships

In the preparatory meetings leading to Johannesburg, “Type II” partnerships (distinguished from

intergovernmental, “Type I” commitments) attracted much controversy and debate among governments and stakeholders. Critics aired four main concerns:

- Partnerships could be used as a substitute for intergovernmental commitments such as treaties, thus allowing governments to abdicate from responsibilities that are properly a function of the state and threatening multilateral negotiations and cooperation.
- Corporations could use Type-II Partnerships to bring inappropriate corporate money and influence into the United Nations,¹ and develop partnerships that would serve as “greenwash.”²
- The governance of the partnerships is unclear, including accountability mechanisms and provisions for transparency and monitoring.
- Partnerships might be financed through existing Official Development Assistance, rather than through “new” money, and thus could actually divert existing resources from other priority needs.³

Sources: ¹Friends of the Earth, “Type 2 Outcomes—Voluntary Partnerships” <<http://www.foe.org/WSSD/partnerships.html>> (22 November 2002); ²Greenwash is defined here to mean superficial instruments of public relations aimed at establishing credibility with little concrete action, or instruments to promote privatization; ³The Northern Alliance for Sustainability (ANPED), Consumers International, Danish 92, Greenpeace, Oxfam, World Wildlife Fund, “Critical Considerations about Type II Partnerships,” 20 August 2002 <<http://www.rio10.dk/>> (22 November 2002).

Failures of the WSSD

The absence of new commitments and innovative thinking, particularly on global environmental issues and how they threaten development in all countries, is probably the most significant weakness of the *Plan of Implementation*.

Rio Principles. The official outcomes of Johannesburg were not a total retreat from the gains achieved at the Earth Summit of 1992. Fears that the Principle on Common but Differentiated Responsibilities¹² and the Precautionary Approach¹³ would be rolled back were not realized. However, while these principles were reaffirmed in the Johannesburg outcomes, they were not advanced in any meaningful way by the *Plan of Implementation*.

Inadequacy of Targets. While the focus on time-bound targets in the Plan is refreshing, most of them (e.g., the U.N. Millennium Development Goals) had already been agreed upon in 2000 at the Millennium Meeting of Heads of State in New York. The only important new targets were in the areas of sanitation, fisheries, and biodiversity, and even these were not without controversy.¹⁴ Most participants acknowledged that the 2015 sanitation target was an important achievement. However, many questioned the meaningfulness of the 2010 target to achieve a significant reduction in the current rate of biodiversity loss, particularly in the absence of accurate estimates of the existing rate of global loss. Still others questioned the fisheries target—to maintain or restore stocks to levels that can produce the maximum sustainable yield no later than 2015—because it is based on the contentious concept of maximum sustainable yield. The failure to reach agreement on time-bound targets for increasing the contribution of renewable energy to the global energy mix was especially frustrating to many governments and other stakeholders, since it had been the subject of intense negotiations. If incorporated, such targets would have been the only place in the *Plan of Implementation* where climate change was addressed in a meaningful way.

Globalization and Trade. The *Plan of Implementation* gave unqualified ratification to the Monterrey agreements on financing and development,¹⁵ and to the Doha processes¹⁶ for a new round of trade negotiations at the World Trade Organization. However, the WSSD failed to signal how development cooperation and expanding international trade could be directed to serve the goals of sustainable development, despite an explicit call for an examination of the relationship between trade, environment, and development. The Plan made no mention, for example, of specific actions to lessen or remove trade's potential negative impacts on sustainable development.¹⁷ Although the Plan recognized both the opportunities and challenges posed by globalization to sustainable development, governments did not provide any direction or guidance from a sustainable development perspective on how these opportunities could be maximized and how the challenges could be overcome. Johannesburg, in this sense, was a missed opportunity for governments to give globalization a sustainable face.

Global Governance and Financing Mechanisms. Governments failed to break new ground on two of the most important sections of the *Plan of Implementation*—on “Institutional Mechanisms (governance)” and “Means of Implementation (financing).” The inability of governments to agree on reform of the existing global environmental governance system, or on how to ensure effective financing of sustainable development, makes meaningful accountability on these issues unlikely. Moreover, it makes it very likely that the obvious failures in these areas since Rio will continue.

THE POLITICS OF JOHANNESBURG

“We go from summit to summit but our peoples go from abyss to abyss... It seems to be a dialogue of the deaf.”

-- Hugo Chavez, President, Venezuela¹⁸

The politics of Johannesburg were complex. The traditional divisions between North and South on key issues such as trade and development finance were evident, yet the North-South paradigm was not useful in understanding the dynamics among governments. For example, negotiations on the renewable energy target featured an alliance among the Latin Americans, the Small Island Developing States (SIDS), and the Europeans (particularly Norway), working against a coalition of oil-producing states, the United States, and a few other countries. Meanwhile, the negotiations on biological diversity highlighted the influence of a coalition of “mega-diverse” developing countries (the countries with the highest levels of biological diversity).

The absence of leadership from developed countries in dealing with environmental issues was also striking—especially issues such as climate change, which are global in nature. This void in leadership had a positive impact on the agenda of developing countries, who wanted development issues to be the priority in the WSSD. But it resulted in weak objectives and a lack of action on major environmental issues. The stance of the United States, for example, was characterized by the avoidance of new multilateral commitments and in some cases hostility to proposals to address global environmental problems. Meanwhile, the role of the European Union (EU) was a disappointment to many. Indeed, one of the low points of the official meeting was when EU negotiators temporarily

“withdrew” from the negotiating process on the excuse that the contentious issues should be elevated to the ministerial level—a tactic that many governments and NGOs criticized as unilateralist and unconstructive.

Indeed, it was countries such as Brazil (which led the coalition for a renewable energy target), Ethiopia (which played a crucial role in preventing the weakening of multilateral environmental commitments) and Norway (pushing for strong commitments on climate change and development assistance) that provided leadership on environmental issues. While leadership from new quarters was a welcome development, it is difficult to see how progress can be made on many environmental issues without the continued leadership of the richest and most powerful countries of the world. In this context, it did not come as a surprise that the *Plan of Implementation* is extremely weak on dealing with environmental challenges.

The official story of Johannesburg gives us a portrait of a world community confronted with immense poverty and serious environmental problems, yet whose governments struggled to find common solutions, divided by competing visions of development and globalization, and paralyzed by a lack of political will. But this is not a complete picture, because Johannesburg was not only about governments. The formal government meeting in Sandton, the official venue of the WSSD, was only one of the many “summits” that took place in Johannesburg during and before the official meeting. These other summits tell a different story: of civil society, including indigenous peoples and local communities, asserting their right to participate meaningfully in environment and development decisions. It was a story of increasingly holding governments accountable for their decisions, and of deciding to implement sustainable development on the ground, with or without official government sanction.

SECTION III: CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE WSSD

“What I find encouraging about Johannesburg are the multiple, parallel summits, and the fact that outside the official negotiations taking place within “UN territory” in the glittering commercial suburb of Sandton, alternative models of politics and environmental governance are being negotiated by delegates, activists, entrepreneurs and assorted others from around the globe.”

-- Rod Bantjes, Professor, St. Francis Xavier University¹

For civil society, participating in the WSSD was a mixed experience: There was frustration and disappointment in both the process and the official outcomes. There was also concern about the pervasive influence of corporate and trade interests on the sustainable development debate. In addition, civil society groups reported a sense of isolation due to inadequacies in the participation process, all while they suffered from a certain fragmentation stemming from the very diversity of civil society groups in attendance.

But there were also successes. Civil society groups did manage to influence some specific outcomes at the Summit, and they were also influential at the national and regional levels. Perhaps more importantly, they were able to build significant alliances, coalitions, and networks on sustainable development. Thus, for many, the WSSD was an opportunity to understand and build capacity for intervening in global decision-making processes, to find common cause with others around the world, and to affirm that they were a part of a movement on sustainable development that is being built from the ground up.

JOHANNESBURG SHORTCOMINGS

An Experience of Fragmentation and Isolation

It was not only civil society groups that experienced a sense of fragmentation and isolation in Johannesburg. Many government representatives and other stakeholders shared this sense. Logistical constraints were a big part of the problem. The physical distance of the civil society venues (such as the NASREC Fairgrounds) from the official conference site; the security arrangements which prevented or hindered access to the official conference site; and lodging and transportation difficulties were all factors. But the Summit also suffered from inadequate mechanisms to facilitate access, transparency, and participation. In addition, the unique dynamics of South African civil society (See Annex A) also contributed to the difficulty that global civil society groups experienced in finding coherence in their engagement with the official process in Johannesburg.

On the other hand, the experience in the Bali Ministerial Meeting, the last of the preparatory meetings for the WSSD (PrepCom IV), was more positive in terms of finding coherence amid diversity and fragmentation. This is probably best explained by the fact that Bali did not have the logistical and geographical challenges that Johannesburg posed. The number of participants in Bali (less than 10,000, with around half from civil society),

compared to South Africa (more than 20,000 from civil society alone), was also a significant factor. Finally, Indonesian civil society was relatively successful in preventing its own internal dynamics from affecting global civil society representation in the official process.

One important consequence of the isolation of civil society was its failure to project to the world media the energy and creativity that was in abundance in the unofficial processes. This failure contributed to media coverage that focused on the divisions between governments and the compromises they eventually made rather than on the sustainable development movement that is emerging from the grassroots.

Civil Society and the Official Process

The role of civil society evolved constantly throughout the official organizing and planning process for WSSD. Rather than just a single week-long event at Johannesburg, the WSSD process stretched over more than a year and included national and regional consultations, roundtables of “eminent persons,” and four international PrepComs.² Civil society groups were involved all along. The structure of participation followed precedents set in the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), where civil society involvement has been formalized over the last decade. This included the structured consultations between governments and civil society known as Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues (MSDs), as well as exchanges of preparatory and summary reporting materials on websites and through email and conventional mail.

The decision to convene discussions on sustainable development at the national, regional, and global scales sprang from an intention on the part of the United Nations to create a “bottom-up” process for determining the agenda at the Johannesburg Summit. The idea was to encourage participation at the grassroots level as well as the more formalized global consultations. While well-intentioned, this strategy yielded variable results. Some events engendered high levels of civil society participation; at others, participation was much less intensive. One of the difficulties was that there was no standardized format for the consultative meetings and roundtables, nor a single convening body to bring uniformity to the output. Therefore, these events differed substantially in their set-up and the ease and attractiveness of participation. The quality and timeliness of announcements of these events—a crucial factor in eliciting participation—also varied, as did the resources available to fund the travel costs for civil society groups traveling from afar.

The Diverse Agendas of Global Civil Society

Of course, the diversity of global civil society meant from the start that participation of civil society groups in the PrepComs and in the final Johannesburg Summit was multifaceted and often divergent. As the agenda for the WSSD started to unfold, the many different concerns of civil society groups began to emerge and take shape. Networks were built and strengthened, and various caucuses formed among NGOs with similar agendas.

Much sharing of information, and development of policy positions and lobbying strategies took place within issue caucuses on energy, climate, sustainable agriculture, forests, and others, as well as within the Major Group caucuses (Women, Youth, Indigenous Peoples, Labor, etc.). For example, the CSD NGO Freshwater Caucus lobbied extensively during the preparatory meetings to include key recommendations from the International Conference on Freshwater in Bonn in 2001. At the Fourth Preparatory Meeting in Bali, the Freshwater Caucus joined fifteen other caucuses in a press conference to comment on the lack of progress in reaching agreement on goals, timetables, and funding for achieving sustainable development. Asked to comment on the progress made so far, they described it as going backwards from commitments made at Rio. Likewise, trade activists who had been following the World Trade Organization (WTO) were able to work together to bring their expertise to bear, alerting other NGOs to the dangers of bringing WTO language into the WSSD *Plan of Implementation*. The work of the trade caucus was important at Johannesburg because trade eventually became one of the most contentious topics during the negotiations.

One of the challenges of civil society engagement in the WSSD process was the lack of any official leadership or formal organizing structure among the civil society groups. A Steering Committee that had been active earlier at the UN Commission on Sustainable Development had broken down, and NGOs were left to act independently on their own agendas or form informal caucuses. From this leadership vacuum, some NGO groupings did arise to help coordinate joint positions and facilitate information flow among NGOs. One such group was the Eco-Equity group, consisting of Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, the World Wildlife Fund, the Danish 92 Group, Earth-justice, Northern Alliance for Sustainability, Oxfam International, Consumers International, and Eurodad. They became quite powerful in Bali (PrepCom IV), where they produced a daily paper called *Eco*, and up-to-the-minute analysis on changes in the official *Plan of Implementation* text and their implications. Their focus was very much on the WSSD's intergovernmental process, as opposed to linking with popular movements outside the official deliberations.

An important international NGO that did not join the Eco-Equity group was the Third World Network (TWN). Based in Penang, Malaysia but with offices in India, Uruguay, Switzerland, London, and Ghana, it is one of the largest Southern-based NGO networks. TWN focuses on issues relating to development, the Third World, and North-South dynamics, aiming to provide a platform to represent Southern interests broadly at international fora such as the United Nations. It had a high profile at the Rio Earth Summit, and during the WSSD preparatory process produced 23 briefing papers on issues such as multilateralism, governance, corporate accountability, biodiversity, trade and debt, climate change, and biotechnology.

Another significant meta-coalition, called the Sustainable Development Issues Network (SDIN), formed when many of the issue-based caucuses banded together. SDIN held briefing sessions at the PrepComs, as did yet another, older coalition called the Southern CSD Clearinghouse.

This fragmentation of civil society activity brought a certain amount of confusion to the WSSD process. What groups could be looked upon as legitimate spokespeople for NGO concerns? Who could speak to the positions of civil society in official processes that

could not accommodate individual submissions from the large number of participating NGOs? To address such concerns, the United Nations asked the three international NGO networks that formed the core of SDIN—the Third World Network (TWN), the Environment Liaison Centre International (ELCI), and the Danish 92-Group—to help fill the leadership void by facilitating the position paper from NGO Major Groups for both PrepComs II and IV. In addition to undertaking this task, they also helped run the SDIN briefings. By PrepCom IV, and in Johannesburg, the SDIN briefing had become the briefing of choice for most NGOs participating in the U.N. process. In spite of these efforts at coordination, fragmentation of civil society efforts remained a significant problem throughout the WSSD process.

Inadequate Mechanisms for Participation

In addition to the diverse agendas and internal dynamics of global civil society, participation in the WSSD also suffered because the mechanisms for official interaction between governments and civil society were inadequate. One problem was the “Major Groups” approach, in which civil society groups sorted themselves by their major field of interest, such as indigenous peoples, labor-related groups, business groups, environment groups, and others. This approach, which was developed earlier by the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), was clearly no longer sufficient to ensure effective access, transparency, and participation by civil society in the WSSD process.

The Major Groups approach worked best in the past, when representation from civil society was more limited (as in the Rio Summit) and where the participants had worked together in the same forum (like the CSD) for many years. However, when the number and diversity of interests became much greater, and the process built up from sub-regional and regional meetings prior to the global stage, as in the case of the WSSD, the “Major Groups” approach fell short. It either became exclusionary and dominated by those more familiar with the process, or too unwieldy for the number of groups participating. One of the clear lessons of the WSSD is that major Summits call for the development of a different mechanism that can accommodate the diversity of modern civil society.

Another mechanism that failed to meet expectations was the MSDs held both in PrepCom II (New York, January 2002) and PrepCom IV (May-June 2002, Bali). Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues (MSDs) enable direct interactions between governments and Major Groups on specific topics. The practice of MSDs was pioneered in the UN Commission on Sustainable Development after the Rio Earth Summit made clear the necessity of including civil society in the sustainable development debate. The dialogues provide opportunities for Major Groups to not only share their concerns, experiences, and proposals in specific areas but also to discuss them in detail with governments in an official forum, rather than on the margins. The process thus enables meaningful inputs from Major Groups into the intergovernmental decision-making process.

While this practice succeeded to some extent in past meetings of the CSD, it broke down in the WSSD process. Very few resources were provided for NGOs to coordinate and

prepare their positions in advance, and to coordinate among the multiple Major Group interests. In addition, governments did not seem to put their hearts into these Dialogues. The lack of attention that government delegations paid to these processes made them all but irrelevant to the official process. Although these dialogues were summarized in the official documents of the WSSD, it is quite clear that governments did not consider them seriously in negotiating the *Plan of Implementation* and the *Political Declaration*.

If Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues are to survive, they must change in structure so that governments and other stakeholders do not consider them a waste of time. They certainly represent an advance from past practice, when civil society voices were either not heard at all during the official meeting, or when only prepared statements could be delivered in plenary sessions. But to become truly viable they must involve better preparation and their role must not be as marginalized as it is today.

It should be noted that both the official Secretariat of the WSSD and the NGOs asked to facilitate civil society engagement in the WSSD exerted heroic efforts to make this engagement as effective as possible. For example, the briefings that the Sustainable Development Issues Network sponsored in both Bali and Johannesburg were very effective in providing timely and accurate information about the intergovernmental negotiations. The openness of the WSSD Secretariat to finding solutions to access problems arising out of security concerns was also commendable. In the end, however, these efforts were dwarfed by the inadequacy of the principal means through which civil society was supposed to engage in the WSSD.

Given this inadequacy, it is understandable that many civil society organizations were disappointed by their ability to participate in the official decision-making process. Many were also disappointed with the outcomes of the official process: unhappy about the compromises that governments struck; dissatisfied with the commitments made; and angry about the extent to which trade and corporate interests have influenced U.N. processes on sustainable development.

The WSSD and its official outcomes were not, however, a complete failure for many civil society representatives. Indeed, many organizations claimed a measure of success in intervening in specific issues of interest to them. These groups also used the WSSD to motivate change at the national and regional levels.

SUCCESS STORIES: CIVIL SOCIETY AND SPECIFIC ISSUES

Many of the successes in the official meeting (discussed earlier in Section II) resulted from civil society engagement in the WSSD and can be directly linked to the efforts of civil society organizations and caucuses. A few examples:

- The inclusion of the sanitation target in the *Plan of Implementation* would not have come about if not for the work by a broad alliance of scientists and advocates from

the water and sanitation community, as well as the efforts of the CSD NGO Freshwater Caucus.

- The acknowledgement that economic growth must be divorced from environmental degradation came about because of lobbying by organizations working on production and consumption issues, including the CSD NGO Production and Consumption Caucus.
- The launch of the Partnership for Principle 10 (PP10) to enable governments, international organizations, and civil society groups to work together to implement practical solutions that provide the public with access to information, participation, and justice for environmentally sustainable decisions. This was a direct outcome of the efforts by The Access Initiative, a coalition of civil society organizations, working on access principles.
- The success of having the value of community-based natural resources management officially recognized, especially in the area of forestry, was the result of aggressive lobbying by the Community-Based Forestry Caucus in Bali.
- The recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights would not have been gained without the hard work of the Indigenous Peoples caucus.
- The success in putting corporate responsibility and accountability on the international agenda would not have been possible without the concerted campaigns of Friends of the Earth, Greenpeace, and other organizations.
- The recognition of the importance of ethics in sustainable development was a result of the efforts of civil society groups in promoting the adoption of the Earth Charter.

In addition to these successes in the official outcomes, civil society played a crucial role in preventing the weakening of multilateral environmental agreements in relation to trade and the dilution of women's rights. Indeed, the successful effort, led by Ethiopia, to prevent language on international trade regime in the *Plan of Implementation* from effectively weakening the global commitment to multilateral environment agreements (global environmental treaties) was assisted by the lobbying efforts of many organizations working on trade issues.³ In a similar vein, some governments who wanted to include language that would have weakened reproductive health and women's human rights did not succeed in doing so largely because of the efforts by women's groups and the women's caucus in the last 24 hours of the summit.⁴

How did these successes come about? While each story is unique, the experience of the community forestry advocates, Indigenous Peoples, and the Partnership for Principle 10 illustrate some of the essential elements that converged to make success possible.

Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management

"For community forestry, Bali was a good moment in history"

-- Thomas Brendler, United States, National
Network for Forest Practitioners (NNFP)⁵

The unequivocal recognition of community-based natural resource management (NRM) in the *Plan of Implementation* was itself an important success. Such recognition could help to make more resources available for NRM projects and make it harder for governments to establish policies that subvert NRM. More significant still was the process by which this acknowledgement was gained. This recognition, actively promoted by a caucus of community-based forestry advocates, was adopted without major dissent from governments as early as the Bali meeting (PrepCom IV). The text remained substantially unchanged in the final version of the implementation plan.⁶

The effort began when community forestry advocates attending the Bali meeting noticed that there was no mention of community-based forest management (CBFM) in the draft implementation plan submitted by the Chairman of the PrepCom. Many advocates did not think anything could be done at that stage, but others decided that an effort to influence governments was called for. Hence, the Global Caucus on Community Based Forest Management was born. This decision led to a series of activities in Bali: inviting other like-minded individuals and groups to be involved, organizing a community forestry caucus, marketing the idea of CBFM and the caucus to governments and other stakeholders (a brochure was produced), and lobbying. The result of these efforts was that the Chairman's text changed within two days after the Caucus' lobbying commenced.

Although it had already achieved its political goal, the Global Caucus on Community-Based Forest Management continued to be active in Johannesburg, meeting regularly with some 50 organizations. Among others, it facilitated the Commission on Forests in the Global People's Forum and continued to watch the intergovernmental negotiations to ensure that the Bali decision would not be reversed.

In the end, the WSSD presented a good opportunity for community forestry advocates to promote CBFM as an alternative to existing forest management models by educating policy-makers and other stakeholders, reaching mass media, and creating public awareness. The WSSD enabled these advocates to work together, influence governments, and, perhaps most importantly, to begin building a worldwide community forestry movement.

Indeed, the real significance of the WSSD was not so much the victory in getting the right language in the *Plan of Implementation*, but in the opportunity to connect and network with each other. By allowing the advocates to come together and build their capacity to influence international decisions that affect them, the WSSD became an empowering exercise. The members of the Caucus (now more than 200 in number) continue to exchange information and ideas online.

Indigenous Peoples in the WSSD

Indigenous Peoples (IPs) made important gains in the WSSD process.⁷ In the official process, the Indigenous Caucus was one of the most articulate and persistent, actively speaking out as early as the first meetings of the Preparatory Committee. Through good

preparation, IPs were able to use the WSSD as an effective organizing tool, with their efforts culminating in the Kimberley Summit of Indigenous Peoples. It is not surprising, therefore, that they won a commitment to improve access by indigenous people and their communities to economic activities. They also gained official recognition that traditional and direct dependence on renewable resources and ecosystems continues to be essential to the cultural, economic, and physical well-being of indigenous people.

The Kimberley Summit of Indigenous Peoples took place in Kimberley, South Africa, from 20-23 August 2002—before governments convened Johannesburg. Mirroring the official meeting, the outcome of Kimberley was also a *Political Declaration* and an accompanying *Plan of Action*.⁸ Using this declaration and their own version of the implementation plan, Indigenous Peoples were able to speak with one voice in Johannesburg and succeeded in getting governments to acknowledge them as principal stakeholders in sustainable development with rights that had to be recognized and respected. They even succeeded in what everyone thought was impossible—getting governments to change agreed text—by convincing them to accept the “s” in Indigenous Peoples, an important political victory for Indigenous Peoples. Indeed, they succeeded in persuading governments to accept Indigenous Peoples’ own language for the *Johannesburg Declaration: “We reaffirm the vital role of indigenous peoples in sustainable development.”*⁹

Many factors contributed to Indigenous Peoples’ success in achieving their political goals. These include: unity among Indigenous Peoples; good preparation resulting from the Kimberley Summit; focused lobbying, and alliances with NGOs. Also important were their effective utilization of side events and parallel events; their active presence in the plenary hall; a credible threat of mass protest if demands were ignored; good timing and, ultimately, the persistence and commitment of the many representatives of Indigenous Peoples who were in Johannesburg.¹⁰

The Partnership for Principle 10

The *Plan of Implementation* commits governments to ensure access, at the national level, to environmental information and judicial and administrative proceedings in environmental matters, as well as public participation in decision-making. This amounts to a reaffirmation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, adopted in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro. This reaffirmation was an important success, especially if the resources to implement this commitment are made available. Related to this, and in the end more significant, was the wide support for the *Partnership for Principle 10* (PP10) by governments, international organizations, and civil society.¹¹

Although Principle 10 was adopted more than a decade ago, implementation of the “access principles” it guarantees has progressed slowly. The rationale of PP10 is that civil society monitoring is vital to remedy this problem and is essential to assessing gaps and stimulating progress in government performance. Working together, civil society and governments can establish commitments to increase public access to information, participation, and justice, and to put their promises into practice. Members of PP10—civil society groups, intergovernmental organizations, and governments—commit not

only to improve their own performance in transparency, consultative process, and accountability, but to help the other members improve their performance as well. PP10 members also work to build the capacity of the public to understand its access rights and participate meaningfully in environmental decisions that affect it.

PP10 emerged from *The Access Initiative* (TAI), a global coalition of civil society organizations promoting national-level implementation of commitments to access to information, participation, and justice in decision-making that affects the environment.¹² PP10 supports this essential national-level work by providing a “support group” at the global level, mobilizing funds to assess the governance performance of governments, and creating a network for sharing “best practices” among governments who want to improve their application of the access principles. PP10 also supports the efforts of major international development institutions, such as UNEP, UNDP, and the World Bank, to integrate Principle 10 into their projects and internal processes.

In spite of the controversy surrounding “Type II” partnerships (see Box 3), PP10 members decided to launch the Partnership at the Johannesburg Summit. They reasoned that its successful launch would garner legitimacy for TAI’s agenda and provide a vehicle for governments, international organizations, and NGOs to formally express support¹³. It would also establish a framework where governments and international organizations could advance the idea that the establishment of transparent, accountable, and participatory decision-making is instrumental to address the array of sustainable development challenges, such as poverty alleviation.

SUCCESS STORIES: IMPACT ON NATIONAL AND REGIONAL PROCESSES

In addition to the successes they achieved on specific issues at WSSD, civil society groups were also successful in effecting change at the national and regional levels, and in empowering their constituents at both the national and international levels. Stories from Brazil, China, the Arab countries and the United States illustrate this. Because of the roles that Indonesia and South Africa played in the WSSD, the story of the impact of the WSSD on civil society in these countries is given special attention in Annex A.

The Brazilian NGOs

“We believe that the initiatives from the civil society do not finish after a big event, and at times they re-invigorate themselves or are redirected from the evolving political context.”

-- Rubens Born, Brazil, Vitae Civilis¹⁴

As veterans of the Rio Earth Summit, Brazilian NGOs held a unique advantage during the WSSD process, allowing them to think strategically and concentrate on the long-term. For example, much of their activity during the Summit preparations was geared toward the long-term development of their leadership and their awareness-raising capacity at the

local and national level, rather than short-term goals. Key themes of focus for the Brazilian NGOs were food security, poverty, environmental quality, and social justice.

Brazilian civil society engagement in the WSSD took place principally through the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for Environment and Sustainable Development (FBOMS). FBOMS sent some 50 representatives to Johannesburg, and these delegates participated as much in the street demonstrations surrounding the Summit as in the closed meetings in Sandton. The 50-person delegation was the largest civil society contingent that Brazil has sent to any UN-sponsored event with the exception of the 1992 Earth Summit, which was held in Rio.¹⁵

But not even at the Rio Summit were there so many representatives from the civil society participating in the official negotiations. Indeed, along with Indonesia and the Philippines, Brazil enjoyed one of the highest levels of NGO participation in official government delegations and access to the official dimensions of the Summit. This allowed them to efficiently monitor the positions governments took on the negotiations, and publicize these through adroit use of the press.

The successful engagement of Brazilian civil society groups with government was a result of intense work that Brazilian NGOs have done in recent years, the goal of which was to open more space for the participation of civil society in the negotiation arena and in decision-making. Because of this experience, every NGO representative in the official Brazilian delegation in Johannesburg understood the issues and the roles they were expected to play. Through them, NGOs were able to present their suggestions for the negotiation text and influence the official position of the Brazilian government delegation. For example, the Brazilian proposal on renewable energy was a fruit of this dialogue and collaboration. The Brazilian delegation was the main advocate for including a renewable energy target in the *Plan of Implementation*.

An important element of the Brazilian civil society strategy in Johannesburg was the priority that they gave to media and outreach. For example, with support from Ford Foundation, FBOMS hired a news agency that would provide coverage of the events in Johannesburg from the perspective of the members of the FBOMS. They had approximately ten journalists generating articles for radio, TV, and newspapers, and a special website devoted to WSSD. This ensured wide coverage not only of civil society events and positions, but also of how the government acted in Johannesburg.

The Brazilian outreach strategy also included efforts to link up with civil society groups from other countries. A prominent outcome of this initiative was the establishment of a network of NGOs and social movements from Portuguese-speaking countries, including Mozambique, Angola, and Brazil.

While Brazilian civil society organizations gained international prominence through their involvement at the WSSD, the gains they achieved in their relations with their own government are of deeper significance. Through their involvement in the domestic preparatory processes for the WSSD, and their collaboration with the Brazilian government in New York, Bali, and Johannesburg, a new relationship has been forged. Whether or not this will measurably improve the prospects for sustainable development

in Brazil is an open question—indeed a challenge to both civil society and government.

Civil Society Groups from China

“The participation of Chinese NGOs from all across China in the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg also marked an important evolution of Chinese civil society. This event will leave a lasting influence on public participation in sustainable development and capacity building for Chinese environmental NGOs.”

-- Sheri Xiaoyi Liao, President, Global Village of Beijing (GVB)¹⁶

The WSSD could be an important turning point for Chinese civil society.¹⁷ At least 30 Chinese grassroots NGOs (more than 150 individuals) were represented in Johannesburg—the widest participation so far by Chinese civil society in a global process. Some of these NGOs were already active in the national preparatory processes, and at the regional preparatory meeting in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Some Chinese NGO representatives were also present during PrepComs III and IV. In Bali, they organized themselves into a China NGOs Caucus to discuss how they could participate effectively at Johannesburg. During the Summit itself, Chinese NGOs met regularly among themselves and had at least three formal dialogues with the Chinese official delegation.

As in the case of Brazil, preparing for engagement in the WSSD began at home with a series of workshops on sustainable development and the WSSD. These included a conference on sustainable consumption and a “Chinese NGO Workshop on WSSD,” which attracted 100 NGO representatives and scholars from more than twenty provinces.¹⁸ In these workshops, government officials were invited so interaction could begin between civil society and government. This preparation was crucial in providing the NGOs with ownership. The greatest triumph for Chinese NGOs that participated at WSSD was the fact that they organized all practical aspects of their participation themselves, and made their presence felt at Johannesburg.¹⁹

Chinese NGOs were most active on the issues of consumption and community forestry. In Bali and Johannesburg, for example, representatives from Global Village Beijing were active in discussions on consumption. In the area of community forestry, NGOs such as Center for Community Development Studies of Yunnan Province joined the Global Caucus on Community Based Forest Management. Upon returning from Johannesburg, these community forestry practitioners decided to take on the responsibility of translating and explaining the language in the Forests section of the *Plan of Action* on communities and Indigenous Peoples. They were empowered to challenge the Chinese government view that, being collectively owned, Chinese forests were already managed by communities. In this sense, these advocates felt that they had gained a certain “authority” to speak about the Summit and sustainable development, due to their participation in the WSSD and the Global Caucus.²⁰

The success in organizing an NGO caucus and the positive engagement of this caucus with the Chinese government is probably the most significant impact of the WSSD process on Chinese civil society. This is the first time that such a caucus emerged in a global environment and development process. Hopes are high that this heralds a new era

of participation in sustainable development in China. As one NGO leader from China observed: “Public awareness and public participation are fundamentally important to implementing sustainable development. A small step by Chinese NGOs to the WSSD, a big step by Chinese civil society in the world.”²¹

Finally, a significant benefit of the WSSD process for Chinese NGOs was the opportunity it gave them to interact with NGOs from all over the world. The WSSD experience made many of the Chinese NGOs realize that they needed to build their own internal capacity, particularly at the technical level. They began to understand that in order for them to be taken seriously by the government, NGOs must develop real expertise and present their positions in a convincing way.²²

The Arab Environmental Caucus

Participants from the Arab region describe their experiences at the Summit as having broken new ground in terms of being able to develop a strong regional presence at an international meeting. The WSSD process also helped them strengthen civil society groups as separate identities and voices apart from their individual governments. They were able to establish contacts and shared interests in Johannesburg that have already translated into focused projects and presentations back in the Middle East and North African region, including: financing for waste management projects at the community level; seminars on TRIPS, globalization, and sustainable development; and, prospects for research and advocacy on issues brought into focus during the Summit.

The experience of participating in a Pan-African series of civil society consultations have brought the region’s civil society groups into important new juxtapositions with other interests in the African continent. This has established clearer areas of common and distinct priorities, as well as the basis for further solidarity on issues of peace and conflict, desertification, water issues, and transboundary resource management.

The declaration that Arab NGOs issued in Johannesburg is illustrative of how far they were able to come in fashioning a set of principles and concrete positions on sustainable development.²³ This declaration called for actions by both the international community and Arab governments and was instrumental in providing avenues for dialogue between the Arab NGOs and their government delegations. What is most striking in their declaration is their commitment on human rights, good governance, and environmental sustainability. Indeed, the declaration begins with the assertion: “Civil Society around the world and, in particular, in Arab countries cannot be strengthened and empowered without an atmosphere of democracy, respect of human rights, and the application of the principles of social justice.” They also stressed that “sustainable development cannot be achieved except with the strengthening of direct public participation and with the context of human rights and principles that takes into consideration the rights and interests of future generations.”

The United States Environmental Justice Movement

“What I didn’t expect to find at the WSSD, where thousands and thousands of people from around the world gathered in one place, was that there would be a consensus. Even though we came to the WSSD with such different backgrounds, different histories, languages, cultures, we had a consensus around marrying human rights protections with sustainable development. For us, there was a shared understanding of the bloody impact of unsustainable development. It is not just a theoretical or technical concept because we understand it in terms of human life that is at stake.”

-- Monique Harden, Advocates for Environmental Human Rights²⁴

The WSSD was an important milestone for the environmental justice (EJ) movement worldwide. The issue of environmental racism has long been the focus—indeed, the rationale—of the EJ movement in the United States. It proposes that people of African descent, Asian descent, Latinos, Indigenous Peoples, and the poor bear a disproportionate burden of the world’s environmental problems.²⁵ But environmental justice is not just a North American, nor for that matter, a race issue alone. Ultimately, environmental justice is a question of universal human rights—the right to live in healthy environment, with access to sufficient resources for food and income security, as well as spiritual and cultural sustenance.

The WSSD, for the environmental justice movement, presented two opportunities: to educate the world’s policy-makers and other stakeholders on the importance of an EJ perspective on sustainable development; and, to network with groups around the world so that a truly global movement on environmental justice can be built.

The EJ movement was clearly successful in their outreach to other stakeholders and especially to each other. In this effort, the United States EJ contingent played a crucial role in getting out the EJ message. Among their contributions was the report released by the National Black Environmental Justice Network, *Combating Racism with Sustainable Development in the US and Around the World – The Time is Now*.²⁶

Using this report as a platform, US-based EJ activists went to the PrepComs in New York and Bali, and then on to Johannesburg with the message that environmental justice was a universal concern, an issue shared by all disenfranchised peoples of the world. As they interacted with colleagues working on environmental justice in other parts the world, they found resonance and consensus. Thus, in Johannesburg, more than 300 environmental justice leaders came together in a four-day event organized by the South Africa-based Environmental Justice Networking Forum (EJNF). Linking very different networks in a common global consensus, the forum explored the effects of environmental racism and other practices that result in poor health, pollution, and hunger. In various panels, speakers challenged governments and corporations to halt their destructive and unsustainable practices that harm the poor, people of color, and Indigenous Peoples.²⁷

WSSD'S IMPACT ON INDONESIAN AND SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY

The impact of the WSSD—not just the summit in Johannesburg but the processes it engendered—on civil society in Indonesia and South Africa deserves special note because of the unique roles that these countries played as hosts to significant segments of the intergovernmental process. Indonesia chaired the preparatory process leading up to the Summit and hosted the last preparatory meeting (PrepCom 4) in Bali in June 2002. South Africa hosted the culminating event of the WSSD, the Johannesburg Summit, and was instrumental in getting governments to agree on the final content of the political declaration and plan of implementation.

In both Indonesia and South Africa, the WSSD processes had profound impacts on the internal dynamics of the nation's civil society, as well as its relations with the national government.

In Indonesia, civil society groups capitalized on the fact that their country would host PrepCom IV by organizing the Indonesia People's Forum (IPF), a major parallel event simultaneous with the official PrepCom meetings. The organizing efforts around the IPF acted as a significant opportunity for civil society groups both to form active issue caucuses focused on the WSSD, as well as to reach across these sectoral caucuses to facilitate broader exchange and coalition forming between major groups. An example is the participation by the Indonesian Centre for Environmental Law (ICEL) in The Access Initiative in Indonesia where it was able to use the WSSD as a platform to influence the policy reform process. On the other hand, the experience of the Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN), a coalition of Indonesian Indigenous Peoples, is a notable example of how the WSSD provided an opportunity for organization, education, and networking.

In South Africa, the Johannesburg Summit and the process leading up to it were conflict-ridden. Preparations for the WSSD served to heighten and crystallize tensions between different civil society factions along political and ideological lines. On one side were civil society groups that wanted to engage in the WSSD process, and were generally supportive of the South African government's approach. On the other, were groups that rejected the WSSD as a legitimate forum and actively challenged the government's record and approach to development. The Johannesburg Summit thus acted as a catalytic event, politicizing many civil society groups and resulting in many protests as well as national dialogue. An illustration of how the WSSD process became an opportunity to engender national debate was the success of the South African Civil Society Water Caucus in putting water at the center of the sustainable development agenda.

While the impact varied for each country due to differences in the structure and variety of their civil societies, the WSSD process was largely a source of civic empowerment in both nations. These processes, by design or unintentionally, became effective vehicles of education; organization and mobilization; coalition building; and engagement with their respective governments. One clear lesson emerges: It is much more likely that civil society organizations will achieve reforms if their goals coincide with national issues and priorities, rather than being primarily international in scope. Sustainable development is more likely to

occur from work that starts at the local level and progresses to national, regional, and eventually global stages. (For a full discussion of the impact of WSSD on Indonesian and South African civil societies, see *Annex A*.)

CIVIL SOCIETY PARALLEL PROCESSES: A MIXED RESULT

As noted earlier, the official government conference in Sandton was only one of the many “summits” that took place in Johannesburg or, for that matter, in South Africa in August and September 2002. Indeed, in addition to the more than 20,000 participants who registered for the official summit, thousands of others from all over the world participated in many parallel events organized in the course of the ten days that the official WSSD convened, as well as during the week that preceded the official meeting.²⁸ All these were “summits” in their own right and understanding what took place in Johannesburg requires an appreciation of these many summits. They included:²⁹

- The Global People’s Forum at the NASREC Fairgrounds;
- The People’s Earth Summit;
- The Kimberley Summit of Indigenous Peoples;
- The Capetown Conference on Responsible Tourism;
- The Week of the Landless;
- The Environmental Justice Networking Forum;
- The International Forum on Globalization;
- The Children’s Earth Summit;
- The IUCN Environment Centre;
- The Summit of Legislators;
- The Summit of Local Governments; and,
- The Implementation Conference.

These other summits of Johannesburg illustrate the extent to which civil society groups now contribute to meeting the challenges of sustainable development. In fact, it is clear that many stakeholder groups are far ahead of governments in building a sustainable development movement on the ground. These summits also made it clear that many groups do not see sustainable development as primarily an environmental matter, but rather, at its core, a human rights and ethical challenge. Hence, social justice and equity were common refrains in many of these parallel summits. The “Week of the Landless”—a parallel event attended by 5000 people—is a good example of the power of these themes at Johannesburg. This event successfully raised the profile of landlessness and land reform in general at the WSSD, and strengthened the global network of organizations and individuals working on these issues.

Another striking feature of these alternative summits was the diversity of voices and interests represented. Unlike the Rio Earth Summit, where civil society engagement was led principally by the global environment movement, Johannesburg saw a different face of global civil society—one that was surprisingly heterogeneous. Indeed, civil society representation at the Johannesburg Summit was the most diverse ever experienced in any

global sustainable development process. This was reflected not just in the number of people and organizations attending, but in the countries they came from, the causes they championed, and the constituencies they represented.

Those who came to Johannesburg included Indigenous Peoples, farmers, the landless, environmental and globalization activists, environmental justice and human rights advocates, representatives of urban and rural communities, religious and spiritual leaders, scientists, policy researchers, local officials, youth and children, development advocates, CEOs and other business representatives, and media. This diversity of civil society representation should be appreciated—even celebrated. But it also posed very real logistical and substantive challenges in terms of assuring effective participation and engagement with the official processes, and even networking and dialogue within the civil society community itself.

At the Rio Earth Summit in 1992, civil society groups convened only a single large parallel event, called the Global Forum. Most of the energy and efforts of the civil society groups present in Rio revolved around the Global Forum processes, which included the drafting of documents called "NGO treaties," meant as alternatives to the products of the official Summit. In contrast, there were many parallel events running simultaneously in Johannesburg. These often revolved around similar themes and were directed at similar audiences, resulting frequently in similar outputs, such as declarations, statements, or action plans. There was no single process, however, that tied all of these events together into one coherent whole so that a collective message could be delivered to governments. The Global People's Forum held at NASREC (See Box 4) was designed to be this one big parallel process. However, for a variety of reasons, including the political dynamics of South African civil society (see Annex A), this did not materialize and no single civil society event captured the participation of everyone that came to Johannesburg. Thus, diversity frequently led to the fragmentation described earlier, which reduced the effectiveness of civil society participation in the WSSD.³⁰

Box 4 Output of the Global People's Forum

The Global People's Forum (GPF) in Johannesburg was attended by thousands of representatives of nongovernmental organizations (approximately 20,000 registered in the forum), the majority of whom were from the Global South. The GPF convened many commissions on sustainable development themes, the reports of which became the basis for a civil society declaration (*The Global People's Forum: Civil Society Declaration: A Sustainable World Is Possible*) and a program of action (*Global People's Forum Programme of Action: A Sustainable World Is Possible*).

The Civil Society Declaration calls on all governments to fulfill commitments made in Rio and Johannesburg. It asks for civil society participation in implementing these commitments. It reaffirms the equality of all people, affirms the rights of Indigenous Peoples, and calls for the rights of refugees to be acknowledged. It advocates fair trade, redistribution and reparations, corporate accountability, debt eradication, anti-privatization, transparency, right to self-determination, and respect for human rights. The Declaration also asserts that the principles of human and environmental security and justice should be the root of all political, economic, and environmental agreements and interventions.

The goal of the GPF Programme of Action is to build a sustainable world, based on principles of human rights, economic justice, and environmental protection. It includes demands and recommendations on issues, such as: agriculture; conflict and peace; corporate accountability; debt eradication and reparations; climate change and energy; social protection and household food security; trade and sustainable development; and, science, education, and capacity building.

Source: Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible: Outcomes of the Global People's Forum at the World Summit on Sustainable Development* (2002).

THE CHALLENGE AHEAD: FINDING STRENGTH IN DIVERSITY

The diversity of voices and faces of those who were in the many "summits" of Johannesburg should be celebrated.³¹ It represents the success of the idea of sustainable development, indicating that it has spread throughout the world and that all peoples and stakeholders recognize it as an imperative. At the same time, however, this diversity poses the difficult challenge of finding common ground and forging common strategies and positions on sustainable development. Several critical questions arise: How do we find unity in this diversity? Can civil society ever speak with one voice again? What is needed to make this possible? One of the most essential steps to answer these questions is to examine the WSSD experience and learn from the lessons shared by each set of participants and, therefore, improve the effectiveness of civil society in future multi-stakeholder processes.

SECTION IV: MAKING PARTICIPATION WORK – LESSONS FROM THE WSSD

“Despite the failures at the inter-governmental level, the summit process will not be a loss if civil society can embark on a new path – a path of renewed confidence and a path of partnership initiatives.”

-- Global Policy Forum, South China Morning Post³²

“The WSSD gave the Elders I worked with a sense of the importance of the wisdom they carry and bring and what its meaning is to the world today. This experience gave them the desire to live. This is a powerful experience - to feel what it was like to be heard and to be seen.”

-- Apela Colorado, WorldWide Indigenous Science Network³³

Regardless of how little real-world impact the official government commitments emerging from Johannesburg may have, the civil society experience of engaging in the WSSD process was ultimately positive. For the majority of people interviewed in preparing this report,³⁴ the WSSD succeeded as an opportunity for personal, professional, and institutional growth. They emphasized the capacity building, networking, and outreach opportunities that the WSSD and its processes provided. The WSSD experience was something they would do all over again, in spite of the great commitment of time, energy, and resources it required. It was, as captured by the words of Apela Colorado above, an empowering and affirming experience for many.

Expectations on what could be achieved in the official process were low from the very beginning, so the fact that some successes were achieved surprised many. What lessons can be learned from these successes? What were the strategies and conditions that made it possible for civil society to achieve these gains? Can these successes be replicated in other forums and processes? Why did some civil society caucuses or groups have more impact on the official outcomes than others?

There were “failures” too--shortcomings in effective participation. What were the reasons for these? How can they be avoided in the future?

LESSONS FROM THE SUCCESSES

“Some NGOs are inside the tent and directly influencing the process. Others are outside the tent, but they exert influence through their publications and in hallway interventions. They will be an important element in how the conference is spun to the general public. There the NGOs are going to play a critical role.”

-- Frances Seymour, World Resources Institute³⁵

Important lessons for engagement in future global processes can be learned from the limited successes in influencing the official outcomes of the WSSD. Some common elements in these successes include:

- an explicit decision to influence governments on a given issue;
- a strategic focus, with clearly defined goals;
- an early start and good preparation;
- consistent and persistent intervention; and,
- good logistics, including availability of funding.

In practically all the successes of civil society in the WSSD, an essential element was an explicit decision by the stakeholder group concerned to intervene in the official process and seek to influence it in a specific way. This decision to be “inside the tent” was the first crucial step towards the successful outcome. It was usually motivated by a shared vision – such as achieving more effective community forestry, Indigenous Peoples’ rights, or access to information, participation, and justice – and a recognition that the WSSD provided specific opportunities to promote and advance that vision.

In many cases, these opportunities were provided by the agenda of the WSSD, its various preparatory meetings and, after Bali, the draft text of the implementation plan. In some cases, the opportunities were opened up by the emergence of the idea of partnerships as a means of implementing sustainable development. In all cases, those who succeeded in influencing the official outcomes had clearly defined goals, even if narrowly drawn: *Make sure that there is a target on sanitation. Insert a text on community forestry. Include an “s” in Indigenous Peoples. Lobby so that the United Nations will begin negotiations on corporate accountability and liability. Launch a partnership on Principle 10.*

An early start was also important in achieving success. Civil society involvement in preparations undertaken at the national and regional levels was important. In the case of Brazilian civil society organizations, for example, their extensive participation in national processes partially explains their significant influence on the Brazilian government’s actions in Johannesburg. The participation of NGOs from Asia – such as the Chinese NGOs – in the regional preparatory meeting in Phnom Penh in 2001 was an important capacity building vehicle that better prepared them for the official process.

Extensive preparation by sectoral groups was also crucial. Indigenous Peoples met constantly in the last 12 months leading up to the Johannesburg Summit, convening finally at Kimberley in their own summit just before the official government meeting in Johannesburg. The outcomes of this Kimberley Summit became their platform for the final stages of the WSSD. The community forestry advocates started later than the Indigenous Peoples but, by focusing quickly in the first days of the Bali meeting on what they would seek to influence in the negotiations, they were able to meet their goals by the time the Bali meeting ended.

Another common element of success was consistent involvement throughout the whole process. This meant attending the PrepCom meetings and the official sessions (even when they seemed too technical or bureaucratic), monitoring changes in the draft texts of the *Plan of Implementation* as they were circulated, and keeping an eye on the evolution of the politics of the WSSD. Building and nurturing alliances around specific issues was also a priority. This required effective communication among groups and individuals

during and in-between the official meetings. It also required good planning and logistics, supported by adequate financial resources from foundations and other sources.

For most of these groups, success in the WSSD was measured not so much by what they changed in the official documents as by the lessons they learned in the process, the networks they organized, and ultimately, the organizational capacity they built to influence governments in the future. In this sense, as irrelevant as the official outcomes might seem to the real world, the WSSD became a truly empowering experience. Its success is marked by what civil society groups brought back to their national arenas, where decisions on environment and development are made every day. And back to other global processes, such as ongoing trade talks in the World Trade Organization, or negotiations on the UN Convention on Climate Change, where legally binding decisions and commitments are being forged.

LESSONS FROM THE SHORTCOMINGS

Identifying the reasons why civil society participation in the WSSD was not optimal is as important as learning the lessons of successful participation. In this section, two principal shortcomings of civil society participation in the WSSD are addressed. These are: the need to reform U.N. mechanisms for participation, such as the concept of Major Groups and the way Multi-Stakeholder Processes (MSPs) are conducted; and the imperative to rethink the concept of parallel events, which had its origins in the Rio Earth Summit and other U.N. Summits in the 1990s.

Reforming Mechanisms for Participation

As pointed out in the previous section, a major limitation on civil society participation in the official WSSD process was the inadequacy of the participation mechanisms that the United Nations had put into place. High demands were placed on weakly defined structures such as MSDs and still-emerging cultures of collaboration between NGOs and governments. This has resulted in problems ranging from the resistance that national governments have to sharing the floor with non-governmental actors, to the riddle of how representation within the Major Groups should be determined, to difficulties conducting MSDs. They also unveil some familiar challenges to civil society groups in general, such as issues over who has legitimacy as a representative of a given interest, and conflicts between established groups who know the system and newcomers who challenge their authority. It should come as no surprise that civil society politics are subject to the same vagaries and competition found in other quarters.

The Question of Representation

The representation question—who has the right to speak for others?—has several important aspects. The first deals with basic issues of credibility and legitimacy of civil society organizations. Who exactly do NGOs, unions, and other civil society groups speak for? Their stated constituents? Their donors? Or perhaps even government sponsors using them as proxies? When such basic questions are at issue, it becomes difficult for civil society groups to form effective coalitions, undertake negotiations on

behalf of others, or gain public support for their positions. Yet the very diversity of civil society groups and the variety of their backgrounds and resources make answering the representation question difficult, although transparency in funding and internal processes make judging a group's legitimacy easier.

The question of representation becomes more pointed when it is applied to official government processes such as negotiations or MSPs, where the number of seats at the table is limited, and one or a few groups must speak for the many groups who are not at the table. The concept of Major Groups was created to address this, yet there have been many tensions generated in the Major Groups approach—originally within the CSD—as civil society groups struggled to make sure they were being fairly represented by their Major Groups representatives in official forums. These problems continued to manifest during the WSSD process and contributed to the difficulty of achieving unity of purpose and coordinated impact among civil society groups. Getting beyond this problem will require establishing a transparent process for determining which groups have the right to speak for others on a given issue within official forums.

A third aspect of the representation question is the challenge of achieving some balance between Northern and Southern NGO representation at meetings, so that Northern NGOs, whose numbers have traditionally been disproportionately high, do not end up speaking for all. Southern NGO representation in WSSD processes was far and away the highest of any UN-sponsored event to date, so much progress has been made in this area. Yet there still persist differences in the ability of Northern and Southern NGOs to fund their participation in lengthy processes like WSSD, which extended well beyond one year, and involved travel to four widely scattered PrepComs. Donors can help address this by explicitly acknowledging the importance of supporting Southern NGO participation not just at the final summit meeting, but at the PrepCom level, at which most of the agenda-setting and framing decisions are shaped.

Multi-Stakeholder Processes

“Multi-stakeholder Processes” are one concrete manifestation of the expansion of civil society participation in global environmental processes. They are designed explicitly to facilitate direct and meaningful interactions between governments and civil society stakeholders on specific topics.³⁶ Multi-Stakeholder Processes are now considered an official part of the intergovernmental process and are usually integrated into the agenda and schedule of the official meeting. To date, the Commission on Sustainable Development has been the laboratory of MSPs. Its Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue has become a significant component of the sustainable development process and featured prominently at Johannesburg and the PrepCom meetings (See Box 5).

Box 5 Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues in the CSD and the WSSD

- PrepCom I (30 April - 2 May 2001, U.N. Headquarters, New York): A Multi-Stakeholder panel was held to bring the views of Major Groups to the discussion of how the WSSD should be organized. Representatives of Major Groups made statements, and a report on the expected contributions of Major Groups to the WSSD was submitted for consideration at PrepCom II.
- PrepCom II (28 January - 8 February 2002, U.N. Headquarters, New York): A two-day Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue including representatives from all nine Major Groups was conducted. Each

Major Group submitted a paper prior to the meeting, addressing the topic of sustainable development implementation and providing a basis for discussion. The Chair's Summary of this dialogue segment was included in the final report of the meeting.

- PrepCom IV (27 May - 7 June 2002, Bali, Indonesia): Another two-day Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue took place, including all Major Groups and focusing on issues relevant to capacity building and partnerships for implementation. Dialogue papers were again submitted and during the parallel sessions a facilitator was introduced to increase the coherence of the discussions. The Chair's Summary of this dialogue segment was included in the official report of the meeting.
- World Summit on Sustainable Development (24 August - 4 September 2002, Johannesburg, South Africa): On the final day of the Summit, a one-hour Multi-Stakeholder event took place during which representatives from each major group offered statements reiterating their commitment to implementing sustainable development. The summary of this event was included in the Report of the WSSD.

Source: See http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/major_groups/multistakeholderdialogue.html in the CSD Website.

MSPs have not been welcomed favorably by all stakeholders in global environmental processes. Some governments and NGOs alike are skeptical about their relevance and usefulness. NGOs are concerned that MSPs, because of the prominent place given to industry as one of the Major Groups, could erode further the role of governments in decision-making.³⁷ As noted above, there are also concerns about the transparency of selecting stakeholder representatives and the process under which stakeholder positions are developed and adopted. But ultimately, the greatest concern among many NGOs is whether the benefits of MSPs are great enough to justify the energy and resources required to make them work. Do MSPs make a difference in the decision-making process? Do they actually change the minds of government delegations as they negotiate commitments with each other?³⁸ As indicated earlier, the answers to these questions in the case of the WSSD process seem to be "no."

Yet Multi-Stakeholder Processes cannot be so easily dismissed. Their innovations have been noteworthy and the gains they have brought deserve to be preserved. The seating arrangements of the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogues in the CSD, for example, embody a significant change from business as usual. Major Groups are placed *in the center* of the sessions, while governments sit at the periphery and learn from the exchange of views. This represents a reversal of the conventional seating arrangement of civil society representatives passively observing or having the occasional opportunity to speak at the behest of the session chair. These new arrangements offer the potential for transforming U.N. procedures for decision-making, and even the ways in which governments acquire a very different *quality of information*. The track record of the Dialogues is that some proposals from the Dialogues have carried over into substantive discussions in intergovernmental negotiations and have appeared in the final declarations. Perhaps one proof that this is a significant break from past practice is the fact that it has provoked resistance from some governments who do not want to see civil society voices take such a prominent position at the United Nations.

MSPs are thus an important step toward a more inclusive global environmental governance system. They are not a substitute for existing governance processes nor should their results replace legally binding agreements by governments. However, MSPs can be a complementary process to improve the quality of decisions and to ensure better monitoring and implementation of commitments. The challenge is making such

processes more effective and transparent. For example, rules defining selection of participants in MSPs are needed. Incorporating MSPs into the official program is not adequate; fuller integration is necessary through such steps as aligning MSP topics with the main issues being negotiated. Independent facilitation is also an option, so that MSPs do not become a venue for prepared speeches, but in fact engender authentic dialogue. Finally, accountability mechanisms to ensure that the results of Multi-Stakeholder Processes are taken seriously by governments must be developed and implemented. The best process in the world makes little difference if its results are not reflected in the final decision.

Rethinking Parallel Process

The WSSD experience illustrates that rethinking—even resequencing—parallel processes, particularly those designed to rival the official event in scope, should be an urgent priority for civil society. This includes looking at the utility of parallel civil society documents, such as alternative treaties, declarations, and action plans (See Box 6).

While many of these parallel processes were inherently valuable, their number and diversity also contributed to the fragmentation mentioned earlier. In Bali, because of the limited numbers of participants and the physical characteristics of the conference site, the Indonesian Peoples' Forum was able to minimize the event's sense of isolation. But in Johannesburg, this was more difficult to avoid. The Global People's Forum should ideally have acted as the major civil society parallel event, but the distance of the NASREC site from the official conference, the dynamics of civil society in South Africa, and the sheer diversity of civil society representation made this difficult, if not impossible.

Parallel events that were more limited in scope, had a strategic focus, or were intended primarily as organizational vehicles for a specific cause were more successful in meeting their goals. Good examples include the Kimberley Summit of Indigenous Peoples; the People's Earth Summit, focused on corporate accountability; the Landless Summit; the International Forum on Globalization; and, the various events in the IUCN Environmental Centre. For these events, the political objectives were clear, and participants shared a common agenda and outlook on sustainable development. Such parallel events that are more strategically focused with respect to an official process should continue to be encouraged and supported. Events which are designed principally for raising public awareness, networking, and capacity building are likewise worthwhile and have a place in processes like the WSSD.

However, events on the scale attempted by the Global People's Forum can work only with extensive preparation on-the-ground, both at the national and regional levels. In addition, issues of representation and transparency must be resolved early, and there must be a clear linkage with the official process in terms of agenda and process. Without these elements, such processes can actually work to distract efforts to influence the official process and can exacerbate the fragmentation of civil society.

The same conclusion can be said of efforts to develop civil society declarations, alternative treaties, and similar documents (See Box 6). While these efforts have a value as vehicles to promote dialogue and public awareness, their value as *alternatives* to official documents issued by governments are questionable. Again, the exceptions are those civil society documents that are strategically focused and are vehicles for political organization and lobbying, such as the *Political Declaration* and Plan of Action issued at the Kimberley Summit of Indigenous Peoples.

In sum, global civil society must question the conventional approach to large parallel events, which have become a staple at major U.N. meetings. Given the sheer diversity of civil society organizations active in sustainable development, perhaps a major parallel event during an official meeting is no longer an effective way of organizing stakeholder engagement in global processes. The evolution of the World Social Forum as the major venue in which social movements and civil society can come together to exchange views and strategize might be a way to replace the conventional concept of parallel processes.

Box 6 Parallel Documents: Alternative Treaties and Declarations

Parallel events such as the Global People's Forum in Johannesburg or the Global Forum in Rio often produce documents embodying the philosophy and conclusions of the participants. An example is the Civil Society Declaration titled *A Sustainable World is Possible* that emerged from the Global People's Forum. Whether these documents are called NGO Treaties, as in Rio, or Civil Society Declarations, as in Johannesburg, they absorb much of the time and energy of the participants at these alternative events. They are inevitably the subject of many long debates, drafting committee meetings, and much editing before they are complete.

Such documents seem to have three functions. First, their production provides a process that brings people together to exchange ideas and to network. Second, they provide a potential policy tool to announce to society and government the demands of civil society. Third, they provide a lasting record of the issues on the minds of participants at the time these meetings were convened. While the level of consultation and the length of deliberations may vary, these documents generally reflect a cross section of thinking from civil society.

Is drafting these documents time well spent? As policy tools, they are not perceived to be used very widely, and they often have little apparent effect on the official negotiations and documents that governments issue. On the other hand, they sometimes have media value, helping to get the word out about what civil society is thinking. They seem to be most effective as a tool for bringing people together into focused dialogue. In particular, they have proven useful in getting people to think systematically about the kinds of statements that are useful for policy makers and the media. In short, they are focal points that bring people together, push them to reflect, and produce statements to which they can later refer.

One way to increase the political effectiveness of alternative documents like these is to improve the timing of their drafting and release. At both Rio and at Johannesburg, parallel treaties and declarations were hammered out at the same time as official government deliberations were occurring. This meant that these documents were neither able to feed into the official process, nor to respond adequately to it. Many advocates feel that these treaties and declarations should have been finalized before the official process started, and then a separate process for responding to the official government process established.

Regardless of their timing or political impact, most civil society representatives feel that the importance of such declarations is the coming together of the participants and not the declaration itself. The solidarity and linkages generated by the process endure.

Sources: *The Earth Summit Eco 92: Different Visions*. San Jose, CR: University for Peace; Earth Council; IICA, GTZ and OmCED (2002); Civil Society Secretariat, *A Sustainable World is Possible: Outcomes of the Global People's Forum at the World Summit on Sustainable Development*, Johannesburg, South Africa (2002).

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

Civil society organizations can profit from the lessons learned at WSSD by adopting the following recommendations for engagement in future intergovernmental processes:

- ***Start early at all levels and remain consistently involved in the processes.*** An early start at the national, sectoral, regional, and global levels is important. Together with consistent involvement in preparatory activities, beginning early and being in it for the long haul is a precondition for successful engagement with official processes such as the WSSD. Summits cannot be a form of ‘destination tourism.’ They must be seen by civil society and its supporters as an investment made in the long-term capacity of groups, helping them to build skills and awareness, and forge linkages from local, national, and regional levels to the global.
- ***Make an explicit decision to influence governments and/or to use the opportunity provided by the process to organize, build capacity, and learn lessons that can be brought back to national or other global forums.*** The outcomes of international processes can be influenced, but well-designed strategies must be developed and implemented to make this happen. Such processes, as in the case of the WSSD, also provide many opportunities for learning, capacity-building, networking, and alliance building. Later, groups can bring their lessons and their new capacities to national, regional, and other international forums.
- ***Develop strong logistics—in particular, those related to communication, event venues, accommodations, and transportation.*** This is essential for successful engagement. The consequences of being physically isolated and experiencing difficulties in movement are too serious to leave to chance. They must be avoided through careful planning. The contrast between Bali and Johannesburg speaks for itself.
- ***Resolve representation and transparency issues as early as possible.*** This is essential to achieve coherence amid diversity and to avoid fragmentation, isolation, and distraction. This will also require strategic investments in facilitation, visioning exercises, and organizational and leadership development.
- ***Engage strategically with the media.*** Such engagement, including media relations assistance for civil society groups as well as training for mainstream journalists, can publicize the messages and amplify the successes of civil society.
- ***Continue to invest in Multi-Stakeholder Processes.*** Although these processes suffer from several weaknesses, continued investment to improve and maximize these opportunities to interact with governments should still be a priority. Meanwhile, the export of Multi-stakeholder techniques to other issue arenas, with proper facilitation and design, can be an important contribution to increased

participation at regional and national levels.

- ***Rethink the concept of parallel processes.*** Rethinking these processes, particularly those rivaling official processes in scope, is imperative. This includes the concept of parallel documents, such as alternative treaties, declarations, and action plans. The burden placed on the host country civil society groups responsible for these must be better anticipated and the load distributed, factoring in the natural tendency for competition between national priorities and the hosting of international interests.
- ***Strengthen civil society communication and collaboration with negotiating blocks such as the European Union and G-77 countries.*** More opportunities to collaborate with multilateral governmental blocks would help strengthen the negotiating positions of both civil society groups and these negotiating blocks. It would build stronger multilateral dimensions to civil society's engagement at the United Nations and other global forums such as the World Trade Organization.
- ***Match civil society goals to align with national issues and priorities.*** It is much more likely that civil society organizations will achieve reforms if their goals coincide with national issues and priorities, rather than beginning with objectives that are of an international scope. Sustainable development is more likely to occur from actions and hard work that start at a local level and progress to national, regional, and eventually global stages.
- ***Develop a post-process follow-up strategy.*** A follow-up strategy at the global, regional, national, and sectoral levels is essential if the gains and progress achieved are to be maximized. Given the money, energy, and time invested in a process like WSSD, a concerted effort to build on both the organizational and substantive gains is only sensible.

ANNEX A: THE IMPACT OF THE WSSD ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN INDONESIA AND SOUTH AFRICA – A CLOSER LOOK

The impact of the WSSD on civil society in Indonesia and South Africa is complex and each country deserves to be studied separately. For this purpose, the Ford Foundation commissioned two studies in early 2003. This Annex highlights the studies' findings, taken from the reports prepared by Sandra Moniaga (*Cohesiveness in the Democratization Processes: An Assessment on the Impact of Ford Foundation support to the Civil Society in Indonesia in the WSSD Processes*, 2003) and Patrick Bond (*In the Backyard of the World Summit on Sustainable Development: South Africans Think Globally, Act Locally...and Act Globally?*, 2003).

INDONESIAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE WSSD

The role of the WSSD in enhancing civil society participation in sustainable development processes in Indonesia was evident early in the long process of preparation for the Johannesburg Summit. It became clear to all when Dr. Emil Salim, a strong advocate of Indonesia's environmental NGOs since the 1980's, was selected to chair PrepCom IV (the WSSD's fourth international preparatory meeting) in Jakarta. This inspired several Indonesian NGO leaders to design strategies for capitalizing on the location to promote their democratic, environmental, and social agendas. One of the major efforts to capitalize on PrepCom IV was the Indonesia People's Forum (IPF). The term "Indonesia People's Forum" refers both to a coalition of Indonesian NGOs and to the major civil society event that they organized to parallel the official PrepCom IV meeting.

Planning for the IPF developed quickly, spearheaded by a group of environmental NGOs, namely Kehati/The Indonesia Biodiversity Foundation, WALHI, and WWF Indonesia. With their encouragement, environmental, human rights and women's NGOs from Jakarta and Bogor gathered in June 2001 to establish a means of using the WSSD to maximize national and international civil society participation and mainstream Agenda 21 into Indonesian sustainable development processes. The means and activities¹ they settled upon at this meeting were as follows: 1) Issue the Civil Society Report, assessing the past decade of implementation of Agenda 21 in Indonesia; 2) Establish a People's Forum; 3) Push for the inclusion and consideration of NGOs, civil society organizations, and Indigenous Peoples in the WSSD preparation processes; and, 4) Establish a network to allow the Major Groups (the different categories of civil society groups officially recognized at the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), such as labor, business, Indigenous Peoples, and environmental NGOs) to work together in the WSSD organizing effort.

The IPF process facilitated the formation of issue caucuses on biodiversity, climate change, debt, energy, forests, fresh water, and mining. The process also united three new Major Groups (children, fisher folk, and the urban poor) with six previously designated

Major Groups (Indigenous Peoples, labor, NGOs, peasants, women, and youth). As a result, more than one thousand community leaders from these united groups gathered at PrepCom IV (which had been moved from Jakarta to Bali for security reasons). Over half of these participants were thought to be grassroots community members from rural and urban areas.

This high level of participation was maintained at the final summit in Johannesburg, which hosted a larger delegation of Indonesian civil society participants than had been present at any previous global conference, even though many of these participants had never traveled abroad, much less participated in a world summit. The presence of civil society representatives in Indonesia's official delegation at Johannesburg— one-third came from civil society groups—provided another opportunity for impact of civil society on Indonesia's participation in WSSD.

Civil Society Internal Weakness and Problems

The unforeseen level of participation of civil society at IPF events—from the first national consultation through to the Johannesburg Summit and beyond—brought problems as well as opportunities. It compounded existing weakness of the process, such as the inexperience of the organizers, their limited language capabilities and analytical capacity, and the general disorganization of the Major Groups. Limited resources and experience also hindered Major Groups from making sense of the complex issues in play. In addition, tensions developed between newly formed coalitions (individuals, NGOs, and peoples organizations) due to miscommunication, as well as their differing beliefs, capacities, and cultures. Tensions also arose between newer groups and older, established groups, whose lobbying efforts sometimes prevailed over those with less developed networking skills and little access to funding.

The Disruption of Moving to Bali

The biggest negative influence on the participation of Indonesian civil society in the WSSD process was the government's decision just two months prior to PrepCom IV to move the PrepCom meeting from Jakarta to Bali in order to address heightened security concerns. The relocation greatly complicated the planning process by IPF leaders, requiring a new set of local organizers to carry out a great deal of planning in a relatively short period. Resulting squabbles between some civil society groups were played up in the media, upsetting the local Balinese public and further unsettling the planning process for the Peoples Forum. Worries that the security concerns of this global meeting would negatively impact Bali's tourism started to emerge, fueling local fears that the People's Forum might become a hazard to the Balinese society.

One month before PrepCom IV, a story in the local press indicated that Royalindo, the national tourism organization based in Jakarta, would stay on to organize the event instead of involving the Bali Tourism Board. This stirred up even more controversy since it apparently negated the local government's claim to potential income from the conference. This last controversy, when combined with the other problems, hindered the

attempts of the IPF Media Outreach Team to enlist the media to raise awareness of the critical issues that the Peoples Forum would address, which in turn reduced the participation of the Balinese community in IPF events².

A final challenge to participation in the Peoples Forum occurred when more than 100 NGOs and the nation's largest labor union (Serikat Buruh Seluruh Indonesia, SBSI) called for a boycott of the PrepCom IV meeting to protest the government's decision to relocate it to Bali. Although the IPF lost the participation of SBSI—including its global lobbying capacity, large body of members and strong infrastructure—it was able to recover somewhat by linking up with a coalition of over 38 other labor organizations, NGOs, and political parties called the “May 1 Coalition.” Thus, in the end, participation of Indonesian civil society organizations in the IPF was substantial, although less than what would have been possible under better circumstances.

Civil Society Impact on WSSD Outcomes: Two Examples

- **The Access Initiative (TAI) and the Indonesian Centre for Environmental Law (ICEL):** Before WSSD, ICEL had become known for advocating the Indonesian Freedom of Information Bill in collaboration with NGOs and journalist associations, and for promoting good environmental governance, the democratization of law reform in Indonesia, and the development of environmental law. During the run-up to WSSD, ICEL joined TAI—a global coalition of civil society organizations promoting access to environmental information, public participation, and access to judicial redress—as its main Indonesian partner. ICEL saw TAI as a significant contributor to its local and national agendas. Their participation in TAI empowered them to conduct an assessment of environmental governance in Indonesia. This and their previous work helped them influence the policy reform process. This influence manifested in several concrete ways: formulating and advocating the Bill on Natural Resources; supporting “Bangun Praja”³³—a Ministry of Environment program for good environmental governance; facilitating improved environmental governance through a program run by the Kendari District Government; and, campaigning for the Bill on the Procedures for Law Making.
- **The Experience of Indigenous Peoples:** The Indigenous Peoples Alliance of the Archipelago (AMAN), a coalition of Indonesian Indigenous Peoples, was exposed to an international event for the first time at the WSSD. They developed a strong relationship with the U.N.-designated facilitator for Indigenous Peoples (IPs) early in the WSSD process, in spite of some difficulty in communicating. Cooperation like this was seen in many places as the Indigenous Peoples from Indonesia interacted intensively with the Indigenous Peoples’ Steering Committee and Indigenous Peoples from other countries. AMAN participants genuinely appreciated the efforts of the IP Caucus, which facilitated the activities of Indigenous Peoples from around the world by organizing the International Indigenous Peoples Summit on Sustainable Development in Kimberley and establishing the IP’s own Plan of Implementation and Political Declaration. And while many of the WSSD outcomes were inadequate in the eyes of Indonesian Indigenous Peoples, some relevant advances were made.

Language in the *Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development*—the political declaration issued by governments at the Summit’s end—recognized the important role of Indigenous Peoples. The terminology of using the word “Peoples”—with an “s”—acknowledges that IPs are a collective entity with various distinct peoples. Further, the importance of IPs to sustainable development was reinforced by twelve references to them throughout the many sections of the *WSSD Plan of Implementation*. Perhaps the ultimate outcome in the eyes of the Indonesian IPs was the pride they shared with Indigenous Peoples worldwide: pride that they were able to learn from one another, and that they already go beyond many modern concepts of “sustainable development” to live truly sustainable lifestyles.

The Larger Successes of WSSD

Despite the problems that Indonesian civil society faced, it found some rich learning experiences in the WSSD. (See box A-1 for some of the concrete lessons that PrepCom IV provided the Balinese civil society in particular.) The Indonesian Peoples Forum was identified as one of the first efforts to unite the different sectoral interest groups—the U.N. Major Groups—of Indonesia. This allowed for consolidation and coalition formation both within each sector (e.g., national and local unions banded together under one major group, as did peasant groups) and between various sectors and Major Groups.

The organization that occurred in this consolidation also helped to maximize the participation of Indigenous Peoples in the WSSD process, increasing their confidence and uniting them in their policy positions and lobbying efforts. Within the various sectors, the consolidation and organization helped to facilitate Major Group participation in important U.N. events, but also aided in establishing with other international organizations. Finally, it broadened the civil society alliance with progressive journalists.

Post-Johannesburg: Building the Momentum

The majority of civil society groups in Indonesia see the need for the IPF—or some other multi-sector forum—to continue, and have called for follow-up activities to track the international policies emerging from the WSSD, as well as to carry on the learning processes that these groups experienced as part of the WSSD. The Major Groups in Indonesia, reflecting on their workshop held on 26-27 September 2002, decided to continue the IPF as a coordinating body for civil society organizations. Although the IPF has not yet been able to facilitate the follow-up process to any great extent, some Major Groups have held follow-up consultations. Nonetheless, some tensions remain unresolved and communications are still a problem. The next challenge will be to nurture the seeds that grew during the WSSD process, eventually linking them to a broad democratization and sustainable development policy process.

Box A-1: WSSD and Balinese Civil Society

Balinese civil society experienced some significant gains and learned some important lessons from the WSSD:

- The Balinese civil society groups who participated directly were greatly broadened by their exposure to the national and international communities. The very short preparation period for the Bali-based organizing committee was a good learning process for the Balinese in understanding each other, as well as understanding the seeds for social movement and state-of-the-art civil society action in Bali. For example, there was a realization that the classification of Major Groups by the CSD (UN) is not an appropriate tool for organizing civil society in Bali and that, for the Balinese, the regional meetings (rembug desa, rembug Bali etc.) are more acceptable and suitable approaches.
- Balinese participants and other champions of sustainable development found an openness among Balinese bureaucrats to the sustainable development concept, which may be accepted as the 'soul' for the Bali Recovery Agenda (after the October 2002 bombing). That openness might have happened on its own, since the majority of the Balinese are Hindus, whose beliefs include harmony with nature. However, the PrepCom and WSSD provided new legitimacy and support for this concept.
- During the WSSD process, Parum Samigita (a multi stakeholder forum of civil society in Seminyak, Legian, and Kuta), who are stakeholders in the Japanese-funded Bali Beach Conservation Project, made contact with Japanese officials and JANNI (Japan NGO Network on Indonesia). This contact and the follow-up activities resulted in the reformation of the project's approach to implementing the 'people-participation' concept.
- The Indigenous Peoples in Bangli, visited by some of the IPF participants, were exposed briefly to the WSSD, making them more receptive to the idea of establishing a local commission on sustainable development.

SOUTH AFRICAN CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE WSSD

Hosting the WSSD was a difficult, even debilitating process for South African civil society, not least because the very environment and development problems under discussion at the summit were on display throughout the country. This brought to light many correlations between the WSSD agenda and that of South African civil society. Even as South African President Thabo Mbeki was seeking to influence the model of sustainable development that governments were negotiating in Johannesburg, he was encountering resistance and protest against his government's own development policies from many civil society groups at home. These groups maintained that the government was disguising its own homegrown development crises even as it hosted the WSSD—a sentiment that ultimately resulted in considerable mobilization on the part of civil society in the form of national strikes and community protests during and after the WSSD.

Hence, the engagement of South African civil society in the WSSD process was highly divisive. And although it was fragmented, and even incompetent in many instances, it did have many benefits. These included some very empowering processes of education,

political action, and international networking—benefits which ultimately marked the WSSD as a net gain for nearly all factions of South African civil society.

The Political Context

The most important impact of the WSSD upon South African civil society was to reveal a deep-seated split between groups allied with the ruling government party and groups of the independent left that believe the government is excessively “neoliberal.” On the government’s side were the African National Congress (ANC) and its ‘Alliance’ partners—the South African Communist Party and Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). These formed a political bloc that, alongside many church leaders, NGO officials, and a section of the community/residents movement, hoped to use the WSSD in order to both reform Africa-wide and global-scale processes, and to search for local solutions to sustainable development problems.

In contrast, the ‘Social Movements Indaba’ (SMI) was formed to draw together leftist critics of the government from civil society groups across a variety of activities. This bloc wished to use the WSSD to: link global ‘neoliberalism’ to a variety of local manifestations; blame and shame the South African government for their grievances; and network and unite with international critics of the WSSD to discredit its processes and outcomes in the eyes of the world.

Fueling this division were two simultaneous trends. First, the South African government had gained a reputation since the transition from apartheid in 1994 as a major and progressive voice in international governance circles, hosting and leading such events as the World Conference Against Racism, the launch of the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), the World Commission on Dams, and ultimately the WSSD itself. At the same time, South Africa’s own problems of sustainable development are not only as bad as any other nation due to the legacy of apartheid, but have actually gotten worse since 1994, sparking dissatisfaction among many groups at home who expected more rapid progress (See Box A-2).

The split between the two civil society blocs became an open rupture in 2001 when the leftist bloc was removed from the Civil Society Secretariat, set up to host and organize civil society events at WSSD. The tensions between the blocks continued to manifest as preparations proceeded for WSSD, during the summit itself, and after the summit as well.

On 31 August 2002—in the midst of the summit—the two groups staged competing marches and narrowly avoided meeting in the streets of Alexandra Township—a poor suburb of Johannesburg. Both groups were marching from Alexandra to the rich suburb of Sandton, where the official intergovernmental negotiations were located. The leftist bloc was protesting against what they termed the ‘W\$\$D,’ while the government-supporting group wished to rally in support of nations adopting global-scale UN-mandated reforms at WSSD. The WSSD opponents surprised many with their strength in numbers, gathering some 20,000 protesters—a much bigger crowd than the pro-WSSD, pro-government bloc was able to gather.

Box A-2 South Africa's Development Challenges

Hosting the WSSD brought many of South Africa's persistent development challenges into sharp profile, exposing them to international scrutiny. Different political strategies for addressing these challenges contributed to the tensions among South African civil society groups at the time of WSSD.

- ***The Replacement Of Racial Apartheid For 'Class Apartheid.'*** A report by released Statistics South Africa in October 2002 confirmed that, in real terms, average African household incomes had declined 19 percent from 1995-2000, while white household incomes were up 15 percent. The average black household earned 1/6 as much as the average white household in 2000, down from 1/4 in 1995. Households with less than R670/month income—which consist of mainly black African, colored, and of Asian-descent families—increased from 20% of the population in 1995 to 28% in 2000. The official measure of unemployment rose from 15% in 1995 to 30% in 2000. If frustrated job-seekers are added in, the unemployment rate rises to 43%. These statistics reveal that poverty is getting worse in South Africa. One symptom is that ten million people reported having had their water cut off in one national government survey, and the same number were also victims of electricity disconnections, mainly due to lack of affordability. In addition, two million people have been evicted from their homes or land since liberation in 1994.
- ***Alienation And Discontent Are Increasing.*** According to a 2002 nationwide survey conducted by the Institute for Democracy in South Africa, the number of black people who believe life was better under South Africa's apartheid regime is growing. More than 60% of all South Africans polled said the country was better run during white minority rule. Only one in ten people believed their elected representatives were interested in their needs, and fewer than one in three felt today's government was more trustworthy than the apartheid regime. Black people were only slightly more positive than white and mixed-race groups about the government, with 38% deeming it more trustworthy than before.
- ***South Africa Is Water-Scarce and Water Distribution is Inequitable.*** Inequality exists in the area of natural surface and groundwater (due to apartheid land dispossession) and in consumption norms, with wealthy, urban (white) families enjoying swimming pools and English gardens, while rural (black) women queue at communal taps for hours.
- ***South Africa Has the Most HIV-Positive Residents.*** Approximately five million South Africans are HIV-positive. Yet the government has shown reluctance when it comes to making available safe anti-retroviral medical treatment.
- ***South Africa's Per Capita Greenhouse Gas Emissions are High.*** When south African CO₂ emissions are corrected for both income and population size, they are some 20 times greater than even the United States. In spite of good potential for energy from solar, wind, and tides, renewable energy is underfunded. On the other hand, considerable resources are devoted to nuclear energy R&D and construction of hydropower facilities, including Africa's largest dams.
- ***South Africa Boasts Extraordinary Natural Biodiversity, But Also Enormous Controversies And Conflicts.*** The disputes cover: natural land reserves (including ongoing displacement of indigenous people); the impacts of industrialization on biodiversity; the protection of endangered species; intellectual property rights, especially for indigenous knowledge and organic flora/fauna; and, genetic modification for commercial agricultural purposes.
- ***South Africa's Marine Regulatory Systems are Overstressed.*** They are also hotly contested, given the desire of Black Economic Empowerment entrepreneurs to access fishing quotas during a period of invasion by European and East Asian fishing trawlers.
- ***South Africa's Use Of Exotic Timber Plantations (Mainly Gum And Pine) Has Been Extremely Damaging.*** It concerns not only the destruction of grassland and natural forests, but also the spreading of alien invasive plants into water catchments across the country.
- ***South African Commercial Agriculture Is Reliant Upon Fertilizers And Pesticides.*** This dependence pays little attention to potential organic farming markets.
- ***South Africa's Failure To Prevent Toxic Dumping And Incineration Has Led To Lawsuits.*** The nascent but portentous group of mass tort (class action) lawsuits may move from asbestos victims to those subject to persistent pollution in several extreme toxic pockets (South Durban, Sasolburg, and Steel Valley).

Sources: Bond, Patrick. "In the Backyard of the World Summit on Sustainable Development: South Africans Think Globally, Act Locally... and Act Globally?" Research Report, May 2003; Business Day, 22 November 2002; [http://www.queensu.ca/misp](http://www.queensu.ca/misp;); Carroll, R. (2002), 'More Blacks believe Apartheid Country ran Better', Mail and Guardian, 13 December.

The Impact of WSSD on the Water Debate in South Africa

One of the Johannesburg Summit's major venues, the Waterdome,⁴ housed discussions about one of the most active sectors at the WSSD—water—while providing display space to dozens of major institutions and promoting water and sanitation issues through different events. The Waterdome was also the site of intractable conflict between civil society groups and governments, water companies, and international agencies. The issue of privatization was one hotly debated topic at the summit, along with a plethora of other water and sanitation struggles that had surfaced in prior years. During the WSSD, the South African Civil Society Water Caucus helped to put water at the center of the sustainable development debate (See Box A-3).

Civil society groups aimed at identifying problems and potential solutions at the local, catchment area, national, regional, and international levels. An example of their militancy came during a meeting of corporate representatives on private sector participation in the water sector. Thirty activists, organized by Caucus members along with the Anti-Privatization Forum and a group of displaced people called Survivors of the Lesotho Dams, chanted slogans for the first ten minutes, disrupting the session.

The attention paid to water at the WSSD, and the intense conflict between the South African Water Minister Ronnie Kasrils and poor people ensured a high level of local and international press even after the close of the summit. A series of exposés on South African water policy⁵ between December 2002 and March 2003 highlighted problems with water privatization in both urban and rural areas.

Politicians like Kasrils have taken notice of these South African and international civil society critiques and have started to change their rhetoric, which once strongly promoted public-private water and sanitation partnerships. At the Kyoto World Water Forum in March 2003, Kasrils' Director-General, Mike Muller, presented a strong anti-privatization message.⁶ He acknowledged the need to learn from Johannesburg that “business as usual will not achieve the goals. We need to acknowledge the constraints and review the paradigms within which we work.”

Through fostering civil society coalition-building, a multi-issue analysis, and a higher level of militancy in advocacy, the WSSD played an important role in these national and international debates. Yet not all civil society grievances were aired and settled, despite some concessions by the South African government. These outstanding issues included a lack of official commitment to demand-side management instead of expensive megadam supply enhancements, installation of pre-paid water meters, and ongoing disconnections. Thus, the WSSD's lasting impact is likely its role in developing a politicized civil society—one ready to challenge the ruling party and perhaps even contest state power.

Box A-3 The South African Civil Society Water Caucus

On the eve of the WSSD, South African water minister Ronnie Kasrils invited the South African Civil Society Water Caucus to discuss a variety of problems associated with water and sanitation. The Caucus had formed in July 2002 explicitly for the WSSD, but many of its members were already active in national and local advocacy work on water. With 40 member organizations, the Caucus' Steering Committee members hailed from the premier civil society advocacy groups in the water sector: Earthlife Africa, Environmental Monitoring Group, Network for Advocacy on Water in Southern Africa, the Anti-Eviction Campaign, Rural Development Support Services, Mvula Trust, the Youth Caucus, and the South African Municipal Services Union. Additionally, a representative of the WSSD Civil Society Secretariat was also involved in the Water Caucus' Steering Committee prior to the WSSD. The Caucus tackled a variety of water issues including: sanitation, ecosystems, human rights, privatization and commoditization of water, anti-evictions and water cut-offs, rural water supply, urban water issues, the large dam debate, water conservation and demand management, regional and transboundary water issues, labor, and the promotion of public services.

At the meeting, which was the first such session with a collective grouping of civil society water advocates since Kasrils assumed office in June 1999, the Caucus' Points of Consensus were presented to Kasrils, among which were:

- Rejection of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the plans for water in NEPAD; in particular, a rejection of the privatization of water and the hydropower focus.
- Rejection of the U.N. WSSD process and outcomes up to that point as nothing more than "structural adjustment of the South," and resolution to work together with social movements to realize an alternative vision.
- Water and sanitation are human rights, and all people are entitled to have access to water to meet their basic human needs. Rural communities are entitled to water for productive use to sustain their livelihoods.
- Water management must be accountable to communities at a local level.
- Respect for the integrity of ecosystems as the basis for all life.
- Rejection of the role of the USA, the other G-8 countries, and Trans-National Corporations for their role in pushing privatization and commoditization of water.

Source: Bond, Patrick. "In the Backyard of the World Summit on Sustainable Development: South Africans Think Globally, Act Locally... and Act Globally?" Research Report, First Draft. May 2003.

The Impact of the WSSD on South African Civil Society Movements

Following eight years of a relatively predictable political scene that followed the transition to non-racial democracy, the WSSD served to re-politicize South Africa (See Box A-4). As a result, the consciousness of civil society groups—and for that matter, of the South African government and the African National Congress (ANC)—was raised with respect to alliances, issues, and strategies.

The independent-left forces within South African civil society found the international networking and attention they gained to be decisive, giving them the confidence to contest the legitimacy of the WSSD, the South African state, and the international elite in relation to the issues under debate. South African civil society groups established durable international relationships in areas such as biodiversity, corporate accountability, energy, health, Indigenous Peoples' needs, land, and water. Their diversity of strategies and tactics—from those who sent experts inside to monitor negotiations to those who disputed the legitimacy

of the event from outside—was encompassed in their voices, most of which were heard loud and clear by an international audience.

Although political processes like the rise of new social movements in South Africa are notoriously difficult to measure, it is indisputable that something new and important surfaced at the Johannesburg Summit. Similar large U.N. events, such as at Rio, Beijing, or Copenhagen, did not witness anything like the high level of politicization that captured the spirits of most civil society participants at Johannesburg. The protests against ‘corporate globalization’ typified by the WTO meeting in Seattle and the emergence of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre together combined anti-establishment politics with the sense that “another world is possible,” making Johannesburg the first logical site for intense civil society militancy that was, in large part, directed *against* what was ostensibly a constructive United Nations initiative.

Box A-4 Pretoria and the New Left

How did Pretoria react to the emergence at the WSSD of a powerful leftist critique of its domestic and foreign agenda, joined by strong international allies in the kinds of civil society groups which formerly were supportive of the African National Congress’s (ANC) liberation struggle?

In a statement to an ANC policy conference in September 2002, President Mbeki made clear how deeply he had been shaken by the militancy shown during the WSSD and by the international solidarity with South African demonstrators:

“Our movement and its policies are also under sustained attack from domestic and foreign left sectarian factions that claim to be the best representatives of the workers and the poor of our country. They accuse our movement of having abandoned the working people, saying that we have adopted and are implementing neo-liberal policies.

These factions claim to be pursuing a socialist agenda. They assert that, on the contrary, we are acting as agents of the domestic and international capitalist class and such multilateral organizations as the World Bank and the IMF, against the interests of the working people.”

Sources: Bond, Patrick. “In the Backyard of the World Summit on Sustainable Development: South Africans Think Globally, Act Locally... and Act Globally?” Research Report, First Draft. May 2003.; Mbeki, T. (2002), ‘Statement of the President of the African National Congress, Thabo Mbeki, at the ANC Policy Conference,’ Kempton Park, 27 September.

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6 Summit Secretary-General Says Completed Negotiations Provide a Solid Foundation for Action Press Release. 2 September 2002. United Nations Johannesburg Summit 2002 Web Site. <<http://www.johannesburgsummit.org>>.

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8 Achieving this milestone will require a great deal of investment in both effort (labor and intellectual commitments) and capital. Meeting the 2015 target means nearly doubling the amount of new people getting sustainable access to safe water every five years from 2005 (210 million) to 2015 (880 million) (WEHAB Working Group, "A Framework for Action on Water and Sanitation," August 2002: 21), and requires an increase of 1.6 billion people (32%) served by water supply and 2.2 billion people (59%) served by sanitation (World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nation Children's Fund (UNICEF), Global Water Supply and Sanitation Assessment 2000 Report, 2000, New York). Adding to the investment of effort, estimates of how much the water target would cost to implement range from \$19 billion to \$34 billion, while implementation of the sanitation target would require approximately \$12 billion (Ronnie Kasrils et al., "Press Conference on 'WASH' Campaign," 27 August 2002, Johannesburg, South Africa <<http://www.un.org/events/wssd/pressconf/020827conf5.htm>> October 2002).

9 Geoffrey Lean and James Palmer, "Earth Summit—After days of intense negotiations, leaders settle on a blueprint to keep the plant alive," The Independent (UK), 3 September 2002.

10 Matt Phillips, "Briefing Towards Binding Corporate Accountability Draft," Friends of the Earth, 5 October 2001, <<http://www.foei.org/publications/corporates/accountability.html>> (4 November 2002).

11 See the United Nations' website at <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/summit_docs/2908_partnershipsummary.pdf> for a complete list of partnerships (22 November 2002).

12 "Common but differentiated responsibilities" refers to the notion that developed countries, because of their historical role in causing global environmental problems and because of their access to financial and technological resources, should take the lead in responding to environmental concerns.

13 The precautionary approach states that where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty should not be used as a reason for postponing action.

14 United Nations, United Nations Millennium Declaration, UNGA Resolution, A/Res/55/2 (2000).

15 A document that focuses on mobilizing financial resources for development by covering six policy areas: mobilization of domestic financial resources; mobilization of international resources such as foreign direct investment (FDI) and other private flows; international trade as the engine of economic development; increasing international financial and technical cooperation; external debt; systemic issues such as enhancing the coherence and consistency of the international monetary, financial, and trading systems; and, in addition, the follow-up process. See Michael Hofmann and Rolf Drescher, "The Monterrey Consensus: A New Development Partnership" <<http://www.dse.de/zeitschr/de402-3.htm>> (22 November 2002).

16 World Trade Organization talks that resulted in a declaration which highlights "the urgent necessity for the effective coordinated delivery of technical assistance with bilateral donors, in the OECD Development Assistance Committee and relevant international and regional intergovernmental institutions, within a coherent policy framework and timetable." See Organization For Economic Co-Operation And Development, "Trade for Development: Monterrey Consensus and Doha Declaration Highlight Importance of Capacity Building" <<http://www.oecd.org/EN/document/0,,EN-document-0-nodirectorate-no-12-26709-0,00.html>> (22 November 2002).

17 Stas Burgiel et al., 18.

18 Daily, Matt and Toby Reynolds. "Powell Jeered as Earth Summit Settles Pact." 4 September 2002. Reuters News. 17 January 2003 <<http://80-global.factiva.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/en/arch/display.asp>>.

Section III: Civil Society and the WSSD

1 Bantjes, Rod. "Inside the World Summit– A Delegate's Diary." 2 December 2002. WSSD Delegate's Diary Web Site. 17 January 2003 <http://www.stfx.ca/people/rbantjes/Texts/WSSD_Delegates_Diary.html>.

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4 Planetwire, Final Plan Reaffirms Importance of Saving Women's Lives (2002), Available online at <http://new.hst.org.za/news/index.php/20020907/?comment=list> (15 June 2003).

5 Interview with Thomas Brendler, National Network for Forest Practitioners (NNFP), January 20, 2003, by Antonio La Vina.

6 This account of the Global Caucus on Community Based Forestry is based on interviews with: Thomas Brendler, National Network for Forest Practitioners (NNFP), United States; Richard McCarthy, The Economics Institute, Loyola University, United States; Karen Edwards, Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC), Thailand; Zhao Yaquian, Center for Community Development Studies, Yunnan Province, China; Gan Tin Yu, Institute of Rural Economy, Academy of Social Science, China. These interviews were conducted from January-March 2003.

7 This section is based partially on interviews by Antonio La Vina with: Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, Tebtebba, Philippines, January 2003 and Apela Colorado, WorldWide Indigenous Science Network, Hawaii, United States, January 2003.

8 See <http://www.tebtebba.org> for the texts of these documents.

9 The *Johannesburg Declaration* is available at the UN's WSSD website <<http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/documents/documents.html>> (19 December 2002).

10 Victoria Tauli-Corpuz An Account and Analysis of How the Sentence on Indigenous Peoples Got into the Johannesburg *Political Declaration* (2002), available online at http://www.tebtebba.org/tebtebba_files/wssd/iptext.html

11 The website of PP10 is <http://www.pp10.org>

12 For more information, see The Access Initiative website at <http://www.accessinitiative.org>.

13 At the WSSD, several governments (Uganda, Mexico, United Kingdom, Sweden, Italy, Hungary and the European Commission) and international organizations (IUCN—The World Conservation Union, United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Environment Program and the World Bank) joined the Partnership, which already consisted of ten NGOs from all regions of the world.

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15 Ibid.

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18 Ibid.

19 Communication from Hein Mallee, Program Officer, Ford Foundation, Beijing Office, 10 December 2002.

20 Communication from Hein Mallee, Program Officer, Ford Foundation, Beijing Office, 10 December 2002.

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23 Declaration of Arab NGOs, Issued on 29 August 2002 by Arab NGOs Participating in the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, 19 August 4 September, 2002, Available online at http://www.tradeobservatory.org/library/uploadedfiles/Declaration_of_Arab_NGOs.htm

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26 National Black Environmental Justice Network, Combating Racism with Sustainable Development in the US and Around the World – The Time is Now, August 2002.

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28 For a list and description of parallel events, see <http://www.joburgsummit2002.com/> and http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/html/basic_info/parallel_events.html

29 For summaries of these events and processes, see La Viña, Antonio, Gretchen Hoff, and Anne Marie DeRose. 2003. "The Outcomes of Johannesburg: Assessing the World Summit on Sustainable Development," SAIS Review 23(1): 53-70.

30 In Rio de Janeiro, in 1992, there was really only one big parallel process where the focused energy and efforts of the civil society groups revolved around the Global Forum processes of drafting of the Earth Charter and the alternative NGO treaties. This was because by June of 1992, the main work of lobbying governments on the negotiated text was done, completed in the final PrepCom in New York. In Johannesburg, work left undone from the Bali PrepCom had to be carried forward, necessitating a split among civil society actors still aimed at influencing the intergovernmental text, and those who were dedicating their energies toward shared civil society vision and analysis.

31 For a sampling of civil society positions on key issues during the WSSD, see the Eco-Equity bulletins released during the summit at www.greenpeace.org or www.rio10.dk

Section IV: Making Participation Work

32 Global Policy Forum. "Earth Summit Calls for Action, Not Just Rhetoric." 13 September 2002. Global Policy Forum Web Site – South China Morning Post. 17 January 2003 <<http://www.globalpolicy.org/ngos/role/policymk/conf/2002/0913action.htm>>.

33 Interview by Antonio La Vina, January 2003.

34 See List of Interviewees in Appendix "A".

35 James, Barry. "The expanding reach of nongovernment aid." 15 August 2002. International Herald Tribune. 14 March 2003
<http://80-global.factiva.com.proxygw.wrlc.org/en/arch/print_results.asp>.

36 WRR, P. 167 (2003).

37 Dodds, 2001

38 WRR, p. 167 (2003)

Annex A: The Impact of the WSSD on Civil Society in Indonesia and South Africa

1 Source: Indonesian People's Forum Report presented at the IPF Members Meeting, unpublished internal notes in power point format, November 2002, Depok

2 IPF Report on WSSD, *ibid*.

3 Bangun Praja is good local environmental governance.

4 The MTN Sundome was rented by the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry (DWAF) and renamed the Waterdome for the period of the WSSD.

5. For documentation, see <http://www.queensu.ca/msp> under media. The series appeared in outlets such as the Boston Globe, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists, L'Humanite, Le Monde Diplomatique and Mother Jones.

6. TMuller, M. (2003), 'Water 2003--What should be done: Lessons from Johannesburg and pointers for the future', Speech given at various international fora, Pretoria, Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.