

THE ROAD TO JOHANNESBURG

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) is a meeting of the international community to shape the global sustainable development agenda. The Summit, in Johannesburg, South Africa, from August 26 to September 4, 2002, will bring together tens of thousands of participants from developed and developing countries, including heads of state and government, national delegates and leaders from non-governmental organizations, the private sector, Aboriginal peoples, youth, media and others. Together, participants will look at the next steps needed to implement sustainable development principles.

The road to Johannesburg began with the historic United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in 1972, when the international community met for the first time to focus specifically on global environmental issues. In time, it became clear that more effective results could be achieved by integrating social and economic issues into the mix as well. This led to the more holistic concept of “sustainable

development,” which was advanced by the 1986 World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission) as a more comprehensive approach to global environmental challenges. At the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Agenda 21 was adopted, an unprecedented vision and agenda to achieve sustainable development. Now, 10 years later in Johannesburg, the WSSD presents an opportunity for today’s leaders to set the right foundation to implement action plans on priority issues – water, energy, health, agriculture, and biodiversity.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development is largely centered on the recognition that governments cannot alone ensure the achievement of sustainable development, but rather that progress in this direction depends on partnerships and engagement of all levels of society, focused on shared commitment and shared results.

A series of recent international events and agreements support this partnership focus, and provide important context for the WSSD:

- The Monterrey Consensus, adopted at the International Conference on Financing for Development, presented a framework for new development partnerships, in which developing countries recognize that they need to take actions to create domestic conditions conducive to development, and developed countries provide support to those that do so.
- Canada’s leadership in advancing the *Africa Action Plan* at the 2002 G8 Kananaskis Summit is an example of the Monterrey partnership model at work.
- The Doha World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial set the stage for a new round of trade talks, with particular attention on the needs of developing countries, and established a framework for focused discussions on the relationship between trade rules and multilateral environmental agreements.

It is anticipated that the WSSD will yield three outcomes: a Political Declaration; a Plan of Action; and a number of implementation partnerships and commitments forged among governments, intergovernmental bodies, civil society organizations and the private sector (also known as Type II outcomes).

To prepare for the Summit and build consensus for outcomes, a Global Preparatory Committee held four preparatory meetings. Governments and representatives from other interested groups, including business and non-governmental community leaders, participated in these sessions.

Canada’s Earth Summit 2002 Secretariat was established to coordinate Canada’s preparations and participation in the Summit. During 2001 and 2002, intergovernmental Regional Preparatory Committee meetings (PrepComs) were held in each region of the world – Africa and West Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and North America, Latin America and the Caribbean.

For information about the agenda, outcomes and other details concerning the Summit, and Canada’s participation at the WSSD, consult Canada’s World Summit Web site at www.wssd-smdd.gc.ca.

