

Work Man Like Plan Agreed to Fight Against Poverty and Fight for Sustainable Development Says Klaus Toepfer

Nations Accept Environment's Key Role in Delivering a Healthier and Cleaner World

30 Years UNEP: Environment for Development: People Planet Prosperity

Johannesburg/Nairobi, 4 September 2002 - Satisfactory is how Klaus Toepfer, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), today described the outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

“At various moments during these negotiations we were facing a much weaker prospect for the environment and thus for sustainable development. I am satisfied that what has been delivered is a step forward. While there will be disappointment that nations failed to agree global time tables and targets for boosting the level of renewable energy, it has been agreed that there is a need for regional and national targets for renewable energy. We also have a commitment to halve the number of people without access to sanitation” he said at the close.

Mr Toepfer highlighted some other areas of success. He said there had been important agreements in the area of chemicals. Governments have, for example, accepted the need for a new, international, approach for the management of chemicals and the harmonization of labeling and classification of chemicals which will be operational by 2008.

Governments also aim, by 2020, to produce and use chemicals in such a way that they do not adversely affect human health.

“This should benefit all people and especially those in developing countries and regions like the Arctic where chemical pollution is a real threat to the health of humans and wildlife,” he said.

Mr Toepfer also welcomed world leaders endorsement of the NEPAD, the sustainable development initiative for Africa, and their support to regenerate agriculture and fisheries and to implement food security strategies on the Continent by 2005.

In the field of biodiversity, a commitment to reverse the trend of losses by 2010 should also be welcomed, he said.

A decision to cease destructive fishing practices and establish marine protected areas and networks by 2012, was good news said Mr Toepfer.

An important decision in the plan was the support for the Multi-Lateral Environment Agreements (MEAs) and a re-affirmation that they have parity with the multilateral trading system.

Mr Toepfer also pointed to the action plan for small island states where governments have agreed to reduce and prevent waste and pollution by undertaking, before 2004, initiatives aimed at implementing the Global Plan of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land Based Activities (GPA).

Earlier in the week UNEP along with UNESCO organized a high level round table hosted by Jacques Chirac, the President of France, on cultural diversity and biodiversity for sustainable development.

Mr Toepfer said he was pleased to see that the Plan of Implementation recognizes the need to consider ethics and cultural diversity in the implementation of Agenda 21.

“It also outlines the need to develop policies to improve the cultural, economic and physical well being of indigenous people and their communities,” he said.

Mr Toepfer said the world’s political situation is, in 2002, far different than the one that made the Rio Earth Summit of 1992.

“We had the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War. Today we have a new realism as a result of globalization. So the action plan, agreed here in Johannesburg, is less visionary and more work-man like reflecting perhaps the feeling among many nations that they no longer want to promise the Earth and fail. That they would rather step forward than run too fast,” he added.

Mr Toepfer, who during the summit has been a special advisor to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, said one very positive outcome was the new partnership between governments, civil society, industry and the United Nations (UN) in areas such as corporate responsibility and environmental standards.

“This must be welcomed. The development of a 10-year framework with programmes in support of sustainable consumption and production patterns, based on science-based approaches and life-cycle analysis, has been agreed. We now also have an initiative to encourage industry to improve their social and environmental performance, taking into account the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standards and the Global Reporting Initiative in which UNEP has been involved,” he said.

For More Information Please Contact: Nick Nuttall, UNEP Head of Media, on Tel: 072 533 8239