

Tuesday 23rd April, 2002

Address of your head of state

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Dear Prime Minister,

We are writing to you as representatives of networks of non-governmental organizations in our respective countries (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom and EU Accession countries). We wish to express our deep concern about the poor coordination of the European Union and the direction of talks towards the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, August 26th to September 4th 2002. The European Union also needs to get its own house in order: the Sustainable Development Strategy (SDS) and the external impacts of EU policies are given insufficient priority. We call on EU heads of state to address these issues as the highest priority at the up-coming Sevilla Council Summit.

We welcome the EU's support for governments committing to robust Type I commitments for WSSD. The potential weaknesses of Type II agreements are exemplified by the failure of the Commission on Sustainable Development's 1998 review of voluntary codes of conduct. This initiative's shortcomings underline the need for an intergovernmental commitment to Type I actions, without which the Type II model will fail. Global inequities and environmental degradation, and the economic linkages between these trends, require multilateral action by governments.

First, poverty of people. EU rhetoric on development emphasises the current Doha process at the World Trade Organisation. A genuine development agenda for trade requires a comprehensive pro-poor review, repair and reform of the WTO institution and agreements as advocated by many developing country governments and civil society stakeholders. Governments must agree a clear timetable for implementing the long-

standing UN target for aid: Overseas Development Assistance must reach 0.7% of GNP. The Millennium Development Goals, in fields such as health and education, will not be met by fine words alone.

Second, poverty of planet. Sustainability, with due respect to the differentiated responsibilities of developed and developing countries, should be mainstreamed into economic policies. WTO agreements should support the trade-related provisions of multilateral environmental and social agreements, which are equal autonomous legal entities under international law. Reversing current negative environmental trends requires a strengthened coordination of global environmental governance.

The following commitments for WSSD are essential:

- First, tackling poverty requires a binding timetable for meeting the 0.7% ODA target, resources targeted at the Millennium Development Goals, aid untying, mutual accountability between donors and recipients and enhanced debt relief.
- Second, the UN must be assigned a co-ordinating role in addressing the lack of institutional democracy in the international economic institutions, namely the World Bank, IMF and World Trade Organization. Reform must ensure broad civil society participation in economic decision-making, with particular attention to including the marginalised.
- Third, governments must ensure trade rules promote fair and sustainable development; reversing the pronounced trend to protect business at the expense of the communities and environment in which it operates.
- Fourth, corporate accountability should include measures on right to know, human rights, liability and full disclosure regarding financial transactions with national governments. Purely voluntary approaches are insufficient.
- Fifth, principles of equity and sustainability in natural resource management should be prioritised. The WSSD should assert the primacy of the Convention on Biodiversity (CBD) and the Biosafety Protocol as the appropriate fora for addressing issues relating to agriculture, genetic- and bio-diversity.

The following commitments under the European Union's Sustainable Development Strategy are essential:

- The Sustainable Development Strategy should address the external impacts of EU policies. Current Commission proposals are weak.
- In accordance with the Barcelona Summit conclusions, we call on EU Member States to define their contribution for WSSD based on the Commission's Communication "Towards a Global Partnership for Sustainable Development" and the conclusions of the 4th of March EU Environment Council.
- Furthermore, we point to the European Parliament's recent resolutions on the WSSD which are based upon a wide consultation with civil society and advocate a progressive agenda for the EU at WSSD.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development should agree a global deal for relations between the world's developed and developing countries for years to come.

We call on EU governments not to shirk from this challenge, and to stand up against obstructive international players. The summit should formulate an action and financing plan for promoting rights-based development, poverty reduction and environmental sustainability, not just repeat aspirational goals.

NGOs pledge to stay engaged, representing and reporting to millions of citizens around the world in the North as well as the global South. We urge European heads of state to join us as loud advocates for fair and sustainable development.

Sincerely,

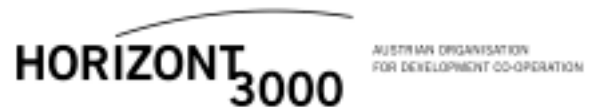
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