



## SUMMARY OF THE WEST ASIA PREPARATORY COMMITTEE MEETING FOR THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT: 24 OCTOBER 2001

The West Asia (Arab Region) Preparatory Committee meeting (PrepCom) for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) took place at the League of Arab States (LAS) headquarters in Cairo, Egypt, on 24 October 2001. Ten North African and 12 Middle Eastern countries make up the Arab Region, referred to by the UN as the West Asia Region. The Arab Region PrepCom was attended by approximately 140 government delegates and observers, including NGO representatives and international organizations.

Prior to the PrepCom, the Joint Committee on Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR) met in a two-day special session on Sunday and Monday, 21-22 October, the Bureau of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment met on Tuesday, 23 October, and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) met on Wednesday morning, 24 October. Following these meetings to develop and discuss the WSSD Progress Assessment Report for the Arab Region (Assessment Report), the Arab Declaration to the WSSD, and the Arab Address (Address), a formal half-day Arab Region PrepCom Plenary was held on Wednesday evening, 24 October, for presentation and adoption of the documents. Discussion was limited, as most issues had been resolved in the three days leading up to the PrepCom. Key regional issues emerging from the Cairo meetings include peace and security, poverty, debt, water management and the need for integration across political levels and sectors.

The Arab Region PrepCom was the shortest of the four regional meetings held so far in preparation for the WSSD. It convened for less than four hours, instead of the two days scheduled. While participants considered the PrepCom's outcomes balanced and comprehensive, a lingering challenge is how the Region will ensure its outputs are integrated at different levels.

The results from this regional preparatory meeting will be fed into the second preparatory session for the WSSD (PrepCom II), scheduled for 28 January to 8 February in New York. The WSSD will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 2-11 September 2002.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The WSSD will be held 10 years after the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). UNCED, also known as the Earth Summit, took place from 3-14 June 1992, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Over 100 Heads of State and Government, representatives from 178 countries, and over 17,000 participants attended the Conference. The principal outputs of the Rio Summit were the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Statement of Forest Principles, and Agenda 21, a 40-chapter programme of action (POA) for sustainable development.

Among other things, Agenda 21 called for the creation of a Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to: ensure effective follow-up of UNCED; enhance international cooperation and ratio-

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nalize intergovernmental decision making; and examine progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 at the local, national, regional and international levels. In 1992, the 47th session of the UN General Assembly set out, in resolution 47/191, the terms of reference for the Commission, its composition, guidelines for the participation of NGOs, the organization of work, its relationship with other UN bodies and Secretariat arrangements. The CSD held its first meeting in June 1993 and has since met annually.

**UNGASS-19:** Also at its 47th session in 1992, the General Assembly adopted resolution 47/190, which called for a special session of the General Assembly to review Agenda 21 implementation five years after UNCED. The 19th Special Session of the UN General Assembly for the Overall Review and Appraisal of Agenda 21, which was held in New York from 23-27 June 1997, adopted a "Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21." It assessed progress made since UNCED, examined implementation, and established the CSD's work programme for the period 1998-2002.

**RESOLUTION 55/199:** In December 2000, the General Assembly adopted resolution 55/199, in which it decided on a ten-year review of UNCED in 2002 at the summit level to reinvigorate the global commitment to sustainable development. The General Assembly accepted South Africa's offer to host the event. The resolution decided that the review should focus on accomplishments and areas requiring further efforts to implement Agenda 21 and other UNCED outcomes, leading to action-oriented decisions. It should also result in renewed political commitment for sustainable development.

**PREPCOM I:** CSD-10, acting as the Preparatory Committee for the WSSD (PrepCom I), took place at UN Headquarters in New York from 30 April to 2 May 2001. The session prepared and adopted decisions on: progress in the preparatory activities at the local, national, regional and international levels, as well as by major groups; modalities of future PrepCom sessions; the tentative organization of work during the Summit; provisional rules of procedure; and arrangements for accreditation and participation of major groups.

**NATIONAL, SUBREGIONAL AND REGIONAL PREPARATORY PROCESSES:** National Preparatory Committees for the WSSD have been established to undertake country-level reviews, to raise awareness, and to mobilize stakeholders. Subregional and regional preparatory meetings for the Johannesburg Summit were to be held between June 2001 and November 2001. Eminent Persons' Roundtables on the WSSD have been held in all five UN regions. The West Asia Preparatory Conference is the fourth of the regional meetings, after the European/North American meeting held from 25-26 September 2001, the Africa meeting held from 15-18 October 2001, and the Latin America and Caribbean meeting from 23-24 October 2001.

**EMINENT PERSONS THEMATIC ROUNDTABLE FOR WEST ASIA:** The West Asia Thematic Roundtable in preparation for the WSSD took place from 9-11 April 2001, in Beirut, Lebanon, to provide governments with an independent view on key sustainable development priorities for the Arab Region. The meeting, organized by the UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and the Joint Secretariat, which is comprised of UNEP's Regional Office for West Asia (UNEP/ROWA), the Technical Secretariat of CAMRE, and the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

(ESCWA), was attended by 14 eminent persons and representatives of nine countries in the Region, other UN agencies, and national, regional and international organizations. The Roundtable identified four major obstacles to the achievement of sustainable development in West Asia: inadequate freshwater resources and poor land management; lack of peace and security; inadequate monitoring and access to credible information; and inadequate public participation in decision making.

**STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS:** Prior to the Cairo meeting, NGOs, industry and stakeholders met in three separate meetings to provide input to the West Asia preparatory process.

**Regional NGO Forum:** This forum, organized by the Joint Secretariat, was held on 8 September 2001, in Manama, Bahrain. Fifty-four participants representing 30 organizations, 15 Arab countries, and various institutions within Bahrain attended. The report of the meeting (UNEP/ROWA/WSSD/NGOs/1) includes a declaration by participants, stating the achievements made by Arab NGOs in sustainable development over the last decade, as well as constraints and challenges faced.

The Manama Declaration, *inter alia*: recommends implementation of the Principles of the February 2001 CAMRE Abu Dhabi Declaration; urges Arab governments to renew their commitments to NGOs and ensure full integration of NGOs into the WSSD process; encourages the LAS to develop sustainable development indicators and establish an Arab Sustainable Development Committee and an Arab Environment Facility; encourages work toward an effective global governance system; advocates increased cooperation between NGOs and the private sector; and calls for NGOs to share in the decision making, planning, implementation and evaluation processes of Agenda 21.

**Regional Industry Forum:** Industry representatives met in Manama, Bahrain, on 22 September 2001, to discuss successes in implementing sustainable development and focal areas for future work. The 47 attendees represented nine countries and were drawn from industry, regional organizations and trade unions, academia, UN agencies and the Joint Secretariat. The Forum produced a report (UNEP/ROWA/WSSD/IND/1) that describes discussions as "frank and constructive."

Recognizing the contributions of the industrial sector to GNP in the Region and in poverty alleviation, but predicting certain undesirable consequences of industrial activity in the near future, the Forum recommended international, regional and local actions, including: determination of a regional strategic position on globalization; attention to the World Trade Organization (WTO) issues on intellectual property rights and on the environment; increased cooperation between government and industry to limit environmental impacts and increase dialogue on interactions between economic and environmental considerations; adoption of clean production strategies and environmentally friendly technologies; and achievement of fair and safe marketing and trade.

**Regional Stakeholders Roundtable in Preparation for the WSSD:** The Arab Regional Stakeholders Roundtable was held in Manama, Bahrain, on 23-25 September 2001, to discuss key achievements and constraints in Agenda 21 implementation and to prepare a platform outlining policy issues, priorities and follow-up actions for the Region. The Roundtable was attended by representatives of: 15



Arab countries, including four ministers and parliamentarians; regional NGO representatives; local authorities; the private sector; trade unions; industry; media; academia and research institutions; regional youth organizations; and regional women's organizations. The final report on the meeting (UNEP/ROWA/WSSD/SRT/1) includes a summary of conclusions and recommendations on proposals for action and means for implementation at the national, regional and international levels. The proposals address, *inter alia*: poverty eradication; globalization and trade; governance, including the participatory process, peace and security; patterns of consumption; and cultural heritage. The report also includes sections on financing sustainable development and institutional support of financial mechanisms and on follow-up actions to the Stakeholders Roundtable, including a recommendation to take the opportunity of the Joint Meeting of the Bureaus of CAMRE and AMCEN to consolidate an Arab/African position in the WSSD.

### REPORT OF THE MEETING

Originally scheduled as a two-day preparatory committee meeting, the West Asia (Arab Region) PrepCom for the WSSD took place from 5:15-8:30 pm on Wednesday, 24 October 2001. Following three days of technical and ministerial meetings to consider the Assessment Report, the Arab Declaration to the WSSD, and the Address, the formal half-day PrepCom was held for official presentation and adoption of the documents. Discussion was limited, as most issues had been resolved during the lead-up JCEDAR and CAMRE meetings that preceded the PrepCom.

#### OPENING CEREMONY

Abdulla Abdulrahman Al-Aryani, Minister of Tourism and Environment of Yemen and Chair of the 13th Session of the CAMRE, called the PrepCom to order at 5:15 pm. Recalling the definition of sustainable development, he noted challenges to the realization of sustainable development including urbanization and the need to link social, economic and environmental factors; drew attention to the Arab Summit to be held in March 2002 in Beirut; and noted the need to establish mechanisms to finance programmes. Stating that stability based on partnership and equity is important for the attainment of sustainable development, he expressed interest in regional and international cooperation for peace and security.

His Royal Highness Prince Fahd bin Abdallah Al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Chair of the Executive Bureau of CAMRE, reported on institutional arrangements for the WSSD preparatory process and drew attention to the three documents to be adopted by the meeting: the Assessment Report, the Arab Declaration to the WSSD, and the Address. He highlighted key regional issues, including globalization, the importance of civil society participation, the need to integrate social and economic with environmental considerations, and proposed the establishment of a regional, ministerial level Arab Council for sustainable development. Prince Al Saud also noted the need to establish a mechanism to finance sustainable development programmes and called for: a preparatory meeting, as soon as possible, for the proposed councils for sustainable development; the establishment of a "world mechanism" for sustainable development; and good governance.

Omar Touqan, ESCWA, highlighted progress made on, *inter alia*, strengthening the role of women and increasing the role of NGOs, said political instability is a hindrance to sustainable development, noted the negative impacts and opportunities presented by globalization, and outlined other sustainable development constraints including the negative environmental effects of technology.

Shafqat Kakahel, Deputy Executive Director of UNEP, conveyed the greetings of UNEP Executive Director Klaus Töpfer, who was still in transit from the Latin America and Caribbean Preparatory Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Kakahel described the preparatory process for the Arab Region PrepCom, called for the creation of long-lasting partnerships, and stressed that peace and stability are prerequisites for sustainable development. Noting prior meetings among eminent persons, industry, stakeholders and civil society, Kakahel expressed confidence that the documents generated through this meeting would reflect the unique priorities, challenges and determination of the Arab Region. He highlighted key emergent themes from the documents, including: a commitment to work in the larger G-77/China context; the impacts of urban and demographic revolutions on natural resources; the need for equitable distribution of the benefits of development; globalization; governance; and sectoral issues including freshwater, desertification, marine protection and urban air and water quality. Emphasizing the need for various resources to support regional sustainable development efforts, Kakahel said UNEP would work with ESCWA, regional partners and other actors to operationalize development goals.

Kamal Sanada, Economic Department of the League of Arab States, welcomed participants on behalf of the LAS Secretary-General. Noting the tense current international atmosphere, widespread disappointment in the failure of developing countries to benefit from globalization, and problems of world trade and international markets, he expressed hope that the Arab world would take the opportunity of the Johannesburg Summit to develop ambitious policies for sustainable development and environmental protection. Sanada highlighted the need for coordinated, effective development at the regional level and broader integration of environment and development, as well as strengthened civil society involvement. He stressed the need for cooperation with others in the WSSD preparatory process, including the G-77/China, to ensure that the Arab Region's goals are incorporated into the Summit's final outcomes.

#### WSSD PROGRESS ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR THE ARAB REGION

Chair Al-Aryani invited delegates to consider the WSSD Progress Assessment Report for the Arab Region. Omar Touqan, ESCWA, noted that the report summarizes international and regional agreements, key regional issues, and future challenges and priorities of work in, *inter alia*: poverty eradication; debt; safety and security; pollution management; education; participation; consumption patterns; and financing for sustainable development.

Delegates made comments on the Assessment Report and the Chair invited other comments in writing for later integration, noting that the document will be re-circulated in mid-November 2001 and a final report will be prepared by mid-December 2001.

A representative of Arab League Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (ALESCO) called for Member States to endorse



the Jeddah Declaration from the October 2000 Global Environmental Forum from an Islamic Perspective. Saudi Arabia proposed that the CAMRE report prepared in Abu Dhabi in February 2001 be annexed to the Arab Region PrepCom Report, and enquired how the Report's adoption by the Arab Summit in March 2002 fits in with the proposed timeframe for reviewing the documents.

Chair Al-Aryani said the Technical Secretariat timeframe was determined by the need to submit documents to the UNDESA in preparation for WSSD PrepCom II, and added that the Report would still be adopted by the Arab Summit in March 2002. Egypt urged that the Assessment Report's recommendations should be translated into implementable programmes.

**Final Text:** The Assessment Report was developed through the Joint Secretariat with stakeholder cooperation. The Report describes:

- socioeconomic and environmental trends, responses and achievements;
- international and regional agreements supporting sustainable development;
- future sustainable development challenges and opportunities;
- financing for sustainable development; and
- priorities for action and means of implementation.

On socioeconomic conditions, the Report weighs improvements in health, fertility, education, literacy, and the status of women with problems of population pressures, economic fluctuations, unemployment, poverty and conflict. Production and consumption patterns are identified as areas of concern, notably the unsustainability of regional energy use, although the Report also discusses recent advances in the exploration for renewable fuel sources.

Freshwater resource use is the primary environmental concern identified in the Report, specifically increasing demand and ineffective water management practices of industry, urban centers and agriculture, among others, and challenges posed by regional peace and security concerns. On land resource quality, the report discusses, *inter alia*, the problems of desertification, land degradation from unsustainable irrigation, and the environmental effects of agrochemical subsidization.

The Report highlights participation in multilateral environmental agreements, as well as increasing interest and participation in economic agreements such as the WTO, a recently strengthened Arab Free Trade Zone, and the newly-created Arab Common Market.

Regarding challenges to sustainable development, the Report describes governance issues including the difficulties of forming integrated, multi-sectoral policies given the highly centralized, but compartmentalized, governance system that prevails in the Region. Lack of information remains the major hindrance to public participation in environmental efforts.

The Assessment Report gives greatest weight to the negative Regional impacts of conflicts and wars, noting that they block effective sharing and management of water resources, drain human and financial resources, and harm the environment and people. The Report notes that trade liberalization is perceived as both a key challenge and opportunity in the Region. Whereas private and public actors are increasingly interested in expanding trade, the requisite international environmental and quality standards constrain their ability to take advantage of new markets. The Report highlights debt burdens and

monitoring of allocated project funds as major challenges to development financing.

The platform of priorities for action lists steps to be taken at the national, regional and international levels in 11 different areas and sectors, including poverty alleviation, the debt burden, and peace and security.

### **ARAB DECLARATION TO THE WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

Mahmood Yusef Abdulaheem, UNEP/ROWA, presented the draft Arab Declaration to the WSSD, describing its origins in the February 2001 Abu Dhabi declaration and the April 2001 Regional Eminent Persons Thematic Roundtable that took place in Beirut, as well as input from civil society. He detailed the Declaration's sections, which address: hindrances to sustainable development in the Arab countries including regional instability, debt burdens, population pressures, drought and limited natural resources; opportunities to achieve sustainable development; and Arab strategies and priorities for enhancing development through, *inter alia*, cooperation with the G-77/China and other developing countries, establishment of legal frameworks and international standards, cooperation with the WTO, development of funding mechanisms, and establishment of monitoring measures.

Jordan, supported by Palestine, Tunisia and Syria, called for annexing a proposal that each Arab country be encouraged to establish a national council for sustainable development. Tunisia said such bodies should collaborate with the proposed Arab Council for Sustainable Development. Iraq noted that this issue was national, not regional, and thus inappropriate for inclusion in the Declaration.

Palestine, with Syria and Lebanon, proposed the establishment of an environmental crimes tribunal similar to that existing for war crimes, highlighting environmental problems related to military occupation by Israel. Iraq said that such a tribunal should encompass environmental violations by all countries, not only those by Israel. Saudi Arabia noted the importance of collaborating with the G-77/China to develop this idea, if the tribunal is to be international in scope.

Discussion also addressed the extent to which the Declaration should highlight achievements in sustainable development and the role of tourism in environmental protection. Following discussion, the Declaration was adopted without the proposed substantive amendments.

**Final Text:** The Declaration recognizes a number of difficulties and constraints to sustainable development in the Arab Region and notes opportunities and challenges relevant to sustainable development. It declares the following:

A Pan-Arab strategy for sustainable development should incorporate the objectives of, *inter alia*:

- establishment of regional peace and security;
- alleviation of poverty;
- reduction of the rate of population growth;
- enhancement of education;
- development and integration of Arab production sectors and adoption of cleaner production procedures to enhance competitiveness and preparedness for industrial and natural disasters; and



- support of civil society, giving special attention to the role of women.
- Priorities for a joint Arab programme of work should include:
- strengthening cooperation with regional and global organizations and groupings;
  - eliminating poverty;
  - developing population policies to manage growth rates and address urbanization; and
  - applying an integrated approach to water resource management.

Means to achieve sustainable development require new governance mechanisms that take into consideration the principle of international law and people's rights, particularly by addressing aspects relating to, *inter alia*, the WTO, informatics, and evaluation and monitoring.

#### **DRAFT ELEMENTS OF THE ARAB ADDRESS TO THE WSSD**

Fatma Salah El Mallah, Technical Secretariat of the LAS, presented draft elements of the Arab Address, which contains key points to be covered by representatives of the Region to present a unified position when discussing sustainable development issues, including during the WSSD process. The Address was only available in Arabic at the meeting. Discussion focused on the environmental impacts of uranium use and on environmental damage caused by Israel. The Address is open for comment until December 2001, although the PrepCom adopted it.

**Final Text:** The Address highlights the following areas: peace and security, poverty eradication, the debt burden, international trade, globalization, building research and technological capacity, governance, population, urban development, health and environment connections, integrated management of natural resources, industry and tourism, natural and cultural heritage, and finance. The Address stresses that globalization should not hinder sustainable development, calls for strengthening the role of the UN, and urges the international community to remove existing landmines.

#### **STATEMENTS FROM REGIONAL ORGANIZATIONS AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS**

Chair Al-Aryani invited additional comments from stakeholders on the three PrepCom documents. A representative of the eight Arab NGOs that met from 19-26 October 2001, for a capacity-building workshop for the WSSD: drew attention to the fact that non-compliance with Agenda 21 in the Arab Region was due to lack of government commitment; reaffirmed the importance of mechanisms and planning within the Ministerial discourse and the involvement of youth in decision making; and noted that the Israeli occupation hinders sustainable development, calling on the Arab Ministers to bring an end to this situation.

A representative of the Global Environment Facility (GEF) noted accelerated environmental degradation in the Region in recent times, and expressed interest in broadening partnership in the Arab Region based on lessons learned from the PrepCom and other regional meetings, as well as in working with Member States and stakeholders.

A UNDP representative: stressed the importance of poverty eradication and the need for globalization to work for the poor; recalled the UNDP contribution toward sustainable development amounting to US\$195 million this year; outlined WSSD-related activities under-

taken by UNDP's Capacity 21 programme and potential areas for future action; and noted the need for action in the Region, particularly in regard to capacity building, linking global and local issues, climate change and energy and lasting peace and security. She said UNDP can assist in ensuring the participation of the Ministries of planning, trade and finance in the WSSD process, and added that the UNDP is working to create synergies with the funding mechanisms of the UNFCCC, Convention to Combat Desertification, CBD, Financing for Development and WSSD processes.

A representative of the World Bank highlighted efforts in the Region and perspectives on critical issues, including: poverty reduction and recognition of the poverty-environment link; respect for cultural traditions and religious beliefs; conflict and violence as major constraints to development; and the need for green accounting. He said the success of the Johannesburg Summit will be determined not by what is said, but by what is done, and should not focus only on environmental issues.

On behalf of Nitin Desai, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, a representative of UNDESA highlighted key sustainable development issues, namely: the challenges of globalization, persistence of armed conflicts, and operationalization of sustainable development. Calling for renewed commitments to Agenda 21, she stressed the importance of national and regional preparations for the Johannesburg Summit.

#### **CLOSING PLENARY**

Offering thanks to all who participated, particularly Egypt's Ministry of Environmental Affairs and Prince Al Saud of CAMRE, and to preparatory meeting participants, Chair Al-Aryani called the meeting to a close at 8:30 pm.

### **A BRIEF ANALYSIS OF THE MEETING**

#### **BAKING THE WSSD CAKE**

The West Asia (Arab Region) Preparatory Committee meeting (PrepCom) takes the record for the shortest of the four regional meetings to date. Initially planned for two days, and later rescheduled to two half-day sessions, the PrepCom concluded in under four hours. The opening ceremony suddenly turned into a closing plenary following the Chair's announcement that business was finished and he would close the PrepCom. Confusion ensued as representatives of regional and intergovernmental organizations scrambled for the floor to make their statements, scheduled for delivery the following day. Some dignitaries were still in transit and thus did not make it to the PrepCom at all.

Well after the session's conclusion, several participants, some of whom had flown half-way across the world, were still trying to comprehend how the two-day agenda they had adopted two hours earlier progressed to a sudden close of the PrepCom. As one participant aptly described it, the session was reminiscent of a television cooking programme in which a four-hour dish is prepared in under ten minutes! This analysis details the factors that led to the rapid conclusion of the PrepCom, its results, and obstacles that remain for this Region. As this was the penultimate regional preparatory meeting, the analysis also reviews the regional outcomes thus far and looks ahead to WSSD PrepCom II.



## **PREHEATING**

Some non-regional participants arrived expecting that, as with the African and Latin America and the Caribbean meetings, substantive work would continue into the scheduled PrepCom. Instead, they found a better-organized Region that had pre-consulted sufficiently to conclude its business in one short session. Preparations for the meeting began in April 2001 – before WSSD PrepCom I – with the Arab Region Eminent Persons Thematic Roundtable. Four other meetings then preceded the Arab Region PrepCom. Many considered the Stakeholders Roundtable held at the end of September 2001 to have been the most important, as it shaped the Assessment Report, the Executive Summary of which provided content for the Arab Declaration.

Consultation and negotiations also took place early in the week on the texts for adoption, with the documents being circulated to Member States for comment prior to the PrepCom and subsequently deliberated on by the Joint Committee for Environment and Development in the Arab Region (JCEDAR), mostly comprised of government with a few stakeholder representatives who met on Sunday and Monday, 21-22 October 2001. Following intensive discussion, their output was forwarded to the Executive Bureau of CAMRE for further negotiation and transmitted for adoption by CAMRE on Wednesday morning, 24 October. Thus, by Wednesday afternoon, the Region had virtually concluded its business, but held a ceremonial session to accommodate the non-regionals who were in town for the PrepCom.

Some participants lamented that, whereas strategic partners overtly expressed interest in collaborating with the Region on priority issues and participants constantly reiterated the need for external support, the language factor and speed with which the meeting was concluded hindered dialogue. Non-regional participants were late entrants into the process in part due to a language barrier – the JCEDAR and CAMRE meetings used Arabic exclusively – precipitating high interest in the PrepCom. Nevertheless, many of the regional participants expressed pleasure at the consultative nature of the process and thorough advance preparation, although they also highlighted obstacles that remain.

## **MISSING INGREDIENTS**

As in the other regional preparations, the Arab Region PrepCom lacked synchronization between the international, national and regional preparatory processes. At the opening of the PrepCom, only three of the Arab Region's 22 countries had concluded their national reports. Fewer still were able to provide feedback on the documents circulated before the 21-22 October JCEDAR meeting, calling into question the effectiveness of the "bottom-up" approach that the exercise was intended to achieve. However, as the PrepCom outputs are to be circulated to members for comment, national-level efforts could still determine the effectiveness of the process. The challenge for efforts at the national level extends to other aspects of the process.

Institutional memory is an important ingredient in any negotiating process. Whereas participants at the Cairo meeting were mainly drawn from capitals with little apparent participation or feedback from UN missions, the Arab Region's representatives to the UN in New York are likely to drive the Region's input when the WSSD agenda is negotiated at PrepCom II. Also, the eight representatives from North Africa at the Cairo meeting were different from those who attended the African Preparatory Conference in Nairobi. The level of coordination and

communication required to ensure harmonization within country positions, let alone in interregional negotiations, may be difficult to resolve and, in the long run, affect implementation of the Johannesburg outputs.

Many participants acknowledge that the Arab Region Assessment is fairly balanced with respect to the three pillars of sustainable development – environment, social and economic aspects. Still, as in other regions, the Arab Region had a disproportionate number of environmental sector participants – only Jordan and Saudi Arabia sent ministerial level delegates representing the economic and social pillars. Many suggest that the main problem is at the national level. The perception that sustainable development is synonymous with the environment often keeps other ministers from becoming involved in the WSSD process. Interministerial turf battles and the frequent view that environmental ministries are less important than those of planning, development and finance may also hamper efforts to extend and coordinate ownership of the concept of sustainable development and participation in the WSSD process. The result is that issues of communication between and within sectors, ministries, regions and negotiating groups are challenges that will be carried all the way to Johannesburg.

## **A TOUCH OF SPICE**

Although greatly outnumbered, non-environment ministers from Jordan and Saudi Arabia contributed a breath of fresh air to this meeting. In response to calls for blanket debt cancellation, Jordan made repeated efforts to ensure proposals constituted not a wishlist, but practical, targeted and specific recommendations. Saudi Arabia provided the pragmatic suggestion to bring the G-77/China into discussions of a proposal to establish an environmental crimes tribunal. These inputs point to the potential added value of participants from other sectors, and to the possibility of attaining an integrated approach to sustainable development.

Non-Arab Region participants commended the inclusion of critical issues that have not featured strongly in the other regions' processes, specifically consumption and production patterns and governance, as this demonstrated boldness by the Region to address sensitive issues. Peace and security emerged as the Region's priority issue, with many recognizing that militarization consumes significant resources that could be better used for human resource development and hinders the ability to share scarce water resources.

Given the political history of many of the Region's countries and a culture in which "wisdom flows from the top to the bottom," the involvement of stakeholders in the Arab Region WSSD preparations was considered a step in the right direction. Although there were mixed views regarding the sufficiency of involvement of other stakeholders in the meeting, participants acknowledged positive progress toward an increasingly inclusive process, as well as openness to the diversity of perspectives expressed during the industry and NGO forums.

## **THE CAKE IS BAKING**

With one regional preparatory meeting – the East Asia and the Pacific Region in late November 2001 – to go before WSSD PrepCom II, the challenges ahead and potential areas for convergence are beginning to emerge.



Recurring themes in Europe, Africa, Latin America and the Arab Region include poverty, debt, globalization, trade, various aspects of environmental degradation and financing of sustainable development. Participants at all but the Latin America and Caribbean Regional meetings referred to the upcoming WTO Ministerial Conference, and issues of security and conflict dominated the African and Arab Region meetings. These convergences suggest *prima facie* that the identification of themes for the Summit may not be too daunting a task, although many challenges remain on the road to Johannesburg.

One of these challenges is how closely PrepCom II will draw on the regional outputs to identify themes. Unlike the European and North American preparations, many of the developing region participants were national rather than New York-based delegates, who will also likely follow the process. Given that the developing regions' preparations will feed into the G-77/China negotiation process, perhaps the Arab Region approach of preparing an Address of "talking points" for their members to emphasize may prove the most valuable asset from the regional preparations.

Developing country emphasis that the Johannesburg Summit is about sustainable development, a leap from the Rio legacy of environment and development, has emerged loud and clear during the preparations to date. Yet, the lack of integration – or deliberate marginalization of the economic and social pillars in the regional meetings – suggests the need first to resolve this sectoral compartmentalization at the national level in order to achieve implementable Johannesburg outputs. However the WSSD agenda is eventually frosted, the divergent opinions emerging from regional preparations, while providing some of the necessary ingredients, offer a taste of the challenge to come in New York when delegates attempt to reach agreement on anything but the broadest of goals.

### **THINGS TO LOOK FOR BEFORE THE WSSD SECOND WORLD CONFERENCE ON TECHNOLOGY**

**ADVANCES FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** This conference is scheduled to take place from 5-8 November 2001, in Cairo, Egypt. This event aims to provide an interactive forum for manufacturers, technology users, interested technologists, policy makers, and other government officials with the objective of evaluating technical and economic feasibilities, policy reform and regulatory issues, financing and market strategies related to management and development of the key resources needed for sustainable development. For more information, contact Fuad Abulfotuh; tel: +20-3-562 25 78; fax +20-3-561 77 75; e-mail: mceet@aast.edu; Internet: <http://www.aast.edu/mceet/>

**MEETING ON GOVERNANCE, SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY ALLEVIATION:** This meeting, expected to deliberate on the issue of governance, is scheduled to take place from 11-13 November 2001, in Beirut, Lebanon. For more information, contact: Hosny Khordagui, Regional Advisor on Environment, ESCWA; tel: +961-1-981301; fax: +961-1-981510; e-mail: khordagui@escwa.org.lb; Internet: <http://www.escwa.org.lb/information/meetings/main.htm>

**MEDITERRANEAN MULTISTAKEHOLDERS CONSULTATION:** The multistakeholder meeting for the Mediterranean region

to prepare for the WSSD is planned for 13 November 2001, in Monaco. For more information, contact: Anastasia Roniotes, MIO/ECSDE; tel: +301-3225245; fax: +301-3225240; e-mail: Mio-ee-environment@ath.forthnet.gr; Internet: [www.mio-ecsde.org](http://www.mio-ecsde.org)

**ARAB PARLIAMENTARIANS' CONFERENCE ON WSSD:** A meeting of Parliamentarians from the Arab Region is expected to take place in Beirut, Lebanon, from 15-16 November 2001, to provide feedback and additional input to the West Asia regional preparations for the WSSD. For more information, contact: Fatma Salah El Mallah, League of Arab States; tel: +20-2-575 0511; fax: +20-2-574 0331; e-mail: f\_mallah@hotmail.com; or Hosny Khordagui, ESCWA; tel: +961-1-981301; +961-1-981510; e-mail: khordagui@escwa.org.lb; or Mahmood Yousef Abdulraheem, UNEP/ROWA; tel: +973-826 600; fax: +973-825 110/1; e-mail: myunrowa@batelco.com.bh; Internet: <http://www.uneprowa.com.bh/regional.htm>

**CONFERENCE ON EQUITY FOR A SMALL PLANET:** This conference will convene from 12-13 November 2001, in London, UK. It will focus on the dynamics and tensions between globalization and local livelihoods and provide a platform for Southern experiences to inform the agenda for the WSSD. For more information, contact: IIED Conference Organizer; tel: +44-20-7388-2117; e-mail: [wssd@iied.org](mailto:wssd@iied.org); Internet: <http://www.iied.org/wssd/meetings.html>

**WSSD REGIONAL PREPARATORY MEETINGS:** The final regional preparatory meeting, for the Asia and Pacific Region, will take place in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from 27-29 November 2001. For more information, contact: Hiroko Morita-Lou, DESA; tel: +1-212-963-8813; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: morita-lou@un.org; Internet: <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/>

**2001 ASIA-PACIFIC EARTH CHARTER CONFERENCE:** This conference is scheduled for 29 November to 2 December 2001, in Brisbane, Australia. The conference will seek to promote awareness, acceptance, and adoption of the Earth Charter for the Asia-Pacific Region. It will also contribute to the region's preparations for the WSSD. For more information, contact: Clem Campbell; tel: +61-7-5429-5401; e-mail: clemcampbell@optusnet.com.au; Internet: [http://www.gu.edu.au/centre/kceljag/eljag/04\\_events/nov2001earthcharter/earth\\_charter.htm](http://www.gu.edu.au/centre/kceljag/eljag/04_events/nov2001earthcharter/earth_charter.htm)

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FRESHWATER:** This conference, hosted by the German Federal Environment Ministry and the German Federal Ministry for Development Cooperation, will be held from 3-7 December 2001, in Bonn, Germany. It will serve as preparation for the WSSD and will review Chapter 18 of Agenda 21 focusing on freshwater issues. For more information, contact: Angelika Wilcke, Conference Secretariat; tel: +49-228-28046-57; e-mail: [info@water-2001.de](mailto:info@water-2001.de); Internet: <http://www.water-2001.de>

**GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT FACILITY COUNCIL:** The GEF Council meeting is expected to consider, among other things, issues related to designation of land degradation as a fourth focal area of its financing and is expected to take place on 6-7 December 2001, in Washington, DC. It will be preceded by an NGO consultation on 5 December. For more information, contact: Mohammed El-Ashry, CEO; tel: +1-202-473 3202; +1-202-522 3245; email: [gef@gefweb.org](mailto:gef@gefweb.org); Internet: <http://www.gefweb.org/>



**SPECIAL AMCEN/CAMRE ECONOMIC COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF PLANNING:** A Joint Meeting of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) and the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for the Environment (CAMRE) is planned for 21-23 December 2001, or early January 2002, to consolidate their position for the WSSD (venue to be determined). For more information, contact: Sekou Toure, UNEP/ROA; tel: +254-2-624284; fax: +254-2-624279; e-mail: Sekou.toure@unep.org; or Mahmood Yousef Abdulraheem, UNEP/ROWA; tel: +973-826 600; fax: +973-825 110/1; e-mail: myunrowa@batelco.com.bh; Internet: <http://www.uneprowa.com.bh/regional.htm>

**SOUTHERN NGO SUMMIT:** This summit will take place in January 2002 in Algiers, Algeria, to prepare for the WSSD. For more information, contact: Esmeralda Brown, Southern Caucus Chairperson, New York; tel: +1-212-682-3633; fax: +1-212-682-5354; e-mail: ebrown@gbgm-umc.org; Internet: <http://www.southngo-summit.org/>

**SECOND WSSD PREPARATORY SESSION:** This meeting will take place from 28 January to 8 February 2002, at UN headquarters in New York. It will review the results of national and regional preparatory processes, examine the main policy report of the Secretary-General, and convene a Multistakeholder Dialogue. For more information, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, DESA; tel: +1-212-963-5949; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: vasilyev@un.org; Major groups contact: Zehra Aydin-Sipos, DESA; tel: +1-212-963-8811; fax: +1-212-963-1267; e-mail: aydin@un.org; Internet: <http://www.johannesburgsummit.org/>

**ARAB NGOS MEETING IN PREPARATION FOR WSSD:** The follow-up meeting for the Arab NGOs to that held in parallel with the West Asia regional preparatory meeting is scheduled for February/March 2002 in Cairo, Egypt. For more information, contact: Emad Adly, General Coordinator RAED; tel: +20-2-3041634/3051635; fax: +20-2-3041635; e-mail: aoye@link.net; Internet: <http://www.ecouncil.ac.cr/ngoexch/aoye.htm>

**ARAB SUMMIT:** The Region's Heads of State and Government are expected to endorse the WSSD Progress Assessment Report for the Arab Region at this meeting, which will take place on 4 March 2002, in Beirut, Lebanon. For more information, contact: Fatma Salah El Mallah, League of Arab States; tel: +20-2-575 0511; fax: +20-2-574 0331; e-mail: f\_mallah@hotmail.com

**MEDITERRANEAN COMMISSION FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (MCSD):** A joint meeting for NGOs in the Arab

and Mediterranean region is planned for March 2002 in Antalya, Turkey. For more information, contact: Emad Adly, General Coordinator RAED; tel: +20-2-3041634/3051635; fax: +20-2-3041635; email: aoye@link.net; Internet: <http://www.ecouncil.ac.cr/ngoexch/aoye.htm>

**INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT:** The UN International Conference on Financing for Development will be held from 18-22 March 2002, in Monterrey, Mexico. It will bring together high-level representatives from governments, the United Nations, and leading international trade, finance and development-related organizations. For more information, contact: Harris Gleckman, Financing for Development Coordinating Secretariat; tel: +1-212-963-4690; e-mail: gleckman@un.org or Federica Pietracci, tel: +1-212-963-8497; e-mail: pietracci@un.org; Internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/ffd>

**THIRD WSSD PREPARATORY SESSION:** This meeting will take place at UN headquarters in New York from 25 March to 5 April 2002. It aims to produce the first draft of a "review" document and elements of the CSD's future work programme. For more information, contact Andrey Vasilyev, DESA (see above).

**INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S CONFERENCE ON THE ENVIRONMENT:** The fourth UNEP International Children's Conference on the Environment will take place in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada from 22-24 May 2002. The conference is expected to bring together 800 children from 10 to 12 years of age from over 115 countries. The conference will also produce a statement from children to the world leaders who will attend the WSSD. For more information, contact: Theodore Oben, UNEP; tel: +254-2-623262; e-mail: theodore.oben@unep.org; Internet: [http://www.unep.org/children\\_youth/](http://www.unep.org/children_youth/)

**FOURTH WSSD PREPARATORY SESSION:** This meeting will take place from 27 May to 7 June 2002, in Indonesia. It will include Ministerial and Multistakeholder Dialogue Segments, and is expected to result in elements for a concise political document to be submitted to the 2002 Summit. For more information, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, DESA (see above).

**WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT:** The World Summit on Sustainable Development will take place in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 2-11 September 2002. For more information, contact: Andrey Vasilyev, DESA (see above).