



Rio+20 Outcome Document *“The Future We Want”– A Critical Review*

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On 9 June, indigenous people and activists formed a human figure on Flamengo beach, Rio, to protest against the **rising poverty and lack of protection of planet earth**



'92 hailed as a great success...

What has gone wrong 20 years on?


The world continues to face a multitude of challenges despite the various principles and pledges made at the Earth Summit in 1992.

- ▶ Energy crises
- ▶ Food crises
- ▶ Water scarcity
- ▶ Land degradation
- ▶ Biodiversity loss
- ▶ Poverty
- ▶ Climate change
- ▶ Deforestation
- ▶ Pollution
- ▶ Financial and economic crises
- ▶ Ocean acidification
- ▶ High population growth

Nowhere in the world are these crises more acute than in Africa!



Rio+20 Conference's two-pronged themes

- ▶ A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication; and
 - ▶ The institutional framework for sustainable development
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Objectives of Conference were

- ▶ Secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development;
 - ▶ Assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development; and
 - ▶ Address new and emerging challenges.
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Expectations before the Conference

A reaffirmation of the original Rio principles and commitments adopted 20 years ago,


These include:

- ▶ Common But Differentiated Responsibilities
 - ▶ Provision of new and additional financial resources for sustainable development
 - ▶ Provision of Technology transfer
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Expectations cont...

- ▶ Recognition that the crises in environment and economy are even more serious today than 20 years ago,
 - ▶ Adoption of new commitments by the political leaders that are adequate enough to tackle these crises in a systematic way
 - ▶ Agreement to significantly strengthen the institutions for addressing sustainable development
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Expectations cont...

- ▶ **Strengthened UNEP with more resources**
 - ▶ **Clear commitments to support developing countries to meet the sustainable development agenda**
 - ▶ **Launch a process on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the post 2015 period which should interface meaningfully with the post -2015 MDG process**
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The Green Economy

- ▶ The conference affirmed that there are different approaches, visions, models and tools available to each country to achieve sustainable development.
 - ▶ Green economy is considered as one of the important tools, guided by the Rio Principles, Agenda 21, the JPOI and contributing to the MDGs.
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Green Economy contd...

- ▶ Promote inclusive growth, strengthen finance and technology transfer to developing countries, avoid aid and finance conditionalities;
- ▶ GE should not be used for trade protectionism;


But there are lingering fears that the concept could still be abused by the developed countries to impose indirect trade barriers on the pretext of compliance with new requirements during the global transition to the green economy.

- ▶ Rio+20 further agreed that GE should help close North–South technology gaps;
 - ▶ Address poverty and inequalities and promote sustainable consumption and production patterns.
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Green Economy Contd...


- ▶ The UN system and relevant donors were asked to coordinate and provide information on matching interested countries with partners to provide requested support, toolboxes and best practices in applying green economy policies and methodologies for evaluating policies
- ▶ Although Green Economy was the main topic of the Conference, it remains debatable in the outcome document what is the exact or agreed definition of GE and therefore no mutual understanding;
- ▶ African civil society should therefore be concerned that without a common view on what GE means, the deployment of the concept in the African context would therefore remain questionable.

Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD)

- ▶ The conference agreed to set up a High–Level Political Forum on sustainable development, to replace the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD).
 - ▶ The CSD does not have a mechanism for implementation and a financing element.
 - ▶ The CSD also fails to occupy a particularly strategic space in the UN system, being a functioning commission of the ECOSOC
 - ▶ Thus we now have the High–level political forum which should eventually replace the CSD
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Institutional Framework cont...

The High-Level Political Forum would have a number of functions, such as:

- ▶ Providing political leadership and recommendations for sustainable development;
 - ▶ Providing a platform for regular dialogue and agenda setting, considering new sustainable development challenges;
 - ▶ Reviewing progress in implementation and improving coordination in the UN system;
 - ▶ Coming up with an action-oriented agenda for new and emerging challenges;
 - ▶ Following up on implementation of all the sustainable development commitments, ensuring coordination within the UN system;
 - ▶ Promoting system-wide coherence and coordination of sustainable development policies.
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Institutional Framework cont...

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

UNEP not a specialized agency but a subsidiary programme, no direct communication channel to UN General Assembly

- ▶ Rio+20 agreed that UNEP should be strengthened and upgraded, including:
 - Establishing universal membership of its Governing Council (previously had only 58 members),
 - Provide stable and adequate financing,
 - Strengthening its regional presence

[At present, country offices in Africa are in Kenya (UNEP HQ), Ethiopia, and South Africa]

- ▶ AMCEN has asked for establishment of five sub-regional offices in Africa

The Means of Implementation (Finance, Technology Transfer and Capacity Building)

- ▶ The conference did not reaffirm provision for new financing for developing countries to meet their sustainable development targets.

No funds were allocated to finance projects in developing countries

- the leaders only reaffirmed that there is need for additional resources
- “We reaffirm that developing countries need additional resources for sustainable development”

A developing countries-backed proposal for a US\$30 billion global fund for sustainable development was shot down by the EU before its merits could even be discussed.

- ▶ The conference went as far as only agreeing that there would be a **follow-up process** in both finance and technology transfer after Rio+20.

Means of Implementation contd...

- ▶ **On financing**, action was deferred to other fora e.g. an inter-governmental process was to start, under the General Assembly to assess financing needs, existing frameworks and additional initiatives, to prepare a report towards a Sustainable Development Financing Strategy for the mobilization of resources;
- ▶ A committee of 30 experts nominated by regional groups will implement this process and conclude its work by 2014.

So it therefore seems no resources between now and 2014 while this process unfolds

Means of Implementation contd....

- ▶ Developing countries must develop own innovative ways to finance their sustainable development agendas and that they should obtain resources from a variety of sources and “new partnerships”.

This would be seen by Africa as a clear indication of the continued attempt by developed countries to renege or back track on earlier commitments on sustainable development.

Means of Implementation contd...

On Technology Transfer

- ▶ While emphasizing the need for Technology Transfer, the conference did not agree on how this was to be done;
- ▶ UN agencies were requested to identify options for a facilitation mechanism to promote development, transfer and dissemination of environmentally sound technologies by assessing technology needs of developing countries, options to address them and capacity building.
- ▶ The UN Secretary General was asked to make recommendations on this mechanism to the General Assembly's 67th session (2013).
- ▶ **So once again action on technology transfer was deferred to other fora, just like finance**

Conclusions

Overall, on Political Commitment, the conference reaffirmed the original Rio Principles including CDDR except for commitments regarding new and additional Financial Resources and Technology Transfer

- ▶ However, some critics (China & G77—including most of Africa) saw the outcome document text as having been constantly watered down to the extent that it became a less effective declaration;
- ▶ Therefore the document has been heavily criticized as having produced weak and non-binding commitments (e.g. littered with language such as reaffirm, recognize, acknowledge, underscore, etc.)
- ▶ Not surprising therefore that Rio+20 has been criticized as having failed to come up with **clear actions** towards SD.

Reactions from across the globe

“Rio will go down as the hoax summit. They came, they talked, but they failed to act.”—Oxfam

“We didn’t get the Future **WE** Want in Rio, because we do not have the leaders we need. The leaders of the most powerful countries supported Business as Usual, shamefully putting private profit before people and the planet.” – Green Peace

“We think the text contains a lot of action... and if follow-up measures are taken, it will indeed make a tremendous difference in generating positive global change.” – Sha Zukang, Rio+20 SG, in defence of the outcome document

Whether this will happen [follow-up action] remains a matter of conjecture.

I THANK YOU!