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JOINT NATURE CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (RIO +10)

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1. What is the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)?

1.1 In December 2000, the UN General Assembly decided to hold a 10-year review of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED - 'Rio') in South Africa in 2002. The inter-governmental UNCED process yielded five documents (Rio Declaration, treaties on climate change and biodiversity, a statement of forest principles and Agenda 21). WSSD will focus on Agenda 21.

2. How is the agenda for WSSD being developed?

2.1 In a similar process to UNCED, Preparatory Committees for UN regions are developing the agenda from the 'bottom up'. Critical to what will be discussed at WSSD is the fact that these Preparatory Committees fall under the auspices of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), which is charged ultimately with delivering a workable agenda. Its starting premise is that Agenda 21 will be the focus of the 10-year review, based upon the rationale that the climate, biodiversity and forestry documents have for of their own adequate to their purpose.

3. What are the themes emerging from the Preparatory Process?

3.1 Two Preparatory Committees had met when this paper was prepared (Africa, and the Economic Commission for Europe (including N America)).

3.2 The African Preparatory Committee appeared to reach significant consensus, highlighting the following:

- i. WSSD must lead to definitive and tangible results, including more resources to finance sustainable development;
- ii. the need to endorse the New African initiative as a framework for Sustainable Development in Africa. This appears to couple commitments from African leaders to deal with poverty eradication, with the removal of international obstacles to development such as debt, barriers to trade, loan conditionalities, promotion of growth

through small and medium sized enterprises, micro-credit financing, agricultural development, access to energy, water and sanitation, and the need to double agricultural production in five years, whilst avoiding becoming a dumping ground for GM foods. There were also concerns about the economic consequence of biodiversity loss;

- iii. a hoped-for Johannesburg Vision reflecting a global consensus on eradicating poverty and inequality; and
- iv. that the theme for WSSD should be 'People, planet and prosperity'.

3.3 By comparison, the ECE Preparatory Committee:

- i. reaffirmed commitment to the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21;
- ii. agreed that much needed to be done on an array of issues including poverty eradication, sustainable management of natural resources, international governance, financing for sustainable development, consumption and production;
- iii. indirectly expressed support for the New Africa initiative described above;
- iv. did not endorse a European (originally UK) proposal for a Global Deal as a mechanism for delivering sustainable development globally, although its aspirations were endorsed; and
- v. compromised on targets for official development assistance (a sticking point between the developing and the developed world since Rio). 'Most countries in the region' agreed that the international community should strive to meet the accepted UN target of 0.7% GNP (only 5 OECD countries currently meet that target, namely Denmark, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Luxembourg).

4. **What is the EU perspective and how does this compare with the others?**

4.1 The European Commission has laid out its views on preparing for WSSD in a Communication. This suggests four strategic objectives the EU should seek to obtain through the Summit. These are:

- i. global equity and partnership for sustainable development;
- ii. international integration and coherence;
- iii. adoption of environment and development targets;
- iv. action at national level and international monitoring.

4.2 Most of these objectives are laudable and few would disagree. However, the adoption of targets and monitoring are seen by the developing world as an

additional burden which will be used to constrain development aid and loan conditionalities, and will, therefore, further hamper their moves to eliminate poverty, by diverting existing and constraining new resources.

- 4.3 The Communication also looks internally at what contribution the EU can make to global sustainable development. Some, like the Cardiff (integration) Process and the 6th Environmental Action Plan are useful and reasonably clear in their intentions and outcomes. Others, such as EU enlargement, bring with them as many risks as they do potential benefits to SD.
- 4.4 It is important for the EU that it agrees a credible Sustainable Development Strategy prior to WSSD. This strategy must address both the external (outside EU borders), as well as the internal, effects of EU policy. The Commission is tasked with producing a Communication on the former early in 2002. The JNCC and the agencies have followed the process, both independently and through the European Environmental Advisory Councils, and it is important that they continue to do so over the coming months.
- 4.5 Recently, Jan Pronk (former Dutch Minister of the Environment) has been appointed by Kofi Annan to play a critical role in formulating the agenda for WSSD. This process will introduce a 'top-down' component to formulating the aims and programme for the meeting.

5. What shape is WSSD likely to have?

- 5.1 Analysis of available information, strongly indicates that not only will there be an almost exclusive focus upon sustainable development by WSSD, but this will, almost certainly, specifically address the issues of poverty alleviation, sustainable production and consumption, equitable trade, and adequate financing of these. The political will is strong amongst the G77 countries that anything that diverts discussion from these matters will be unacceptable. However, the agenda will develop rapidly and we need to be ready to exploit opportunities if, or when, they arise. A number of additional themes are also emerging, such as on water-use and energy, which may be of interest to us.

6. Where might a role for JNCC and agencies lie?

- 6.1 Biodiversity, as a significant element of the environment pillar of sustainable development, is, of course, of great interest to the JNCC and the country agencies. However, as the preceding discussion shows, there is little, if any, scope for promoting biodiversity conservation in the WSSD context. There are, however, several things around the WSSD where JNCC and the country agencies can contribute to the conservation of biodiversity through sustainable development. These are believed to be as follows:
 - i. keep a watching brief, and engage rapidly with specific and emerging issues where they have the skills and resources;
 - ii. continue to engage with the EU Sustainable Development Process, including the impacts of EU policies outside EU borders, and the EU

preparation for WSSD;

- iii. JNCC should continue to develop its relationship with DFID. DFID have recently published a number of papers on biodiversity and poverty, and enhanced dialogue around these should pay dividends in both the run up to, and post, WSSD. The papers have received a mixed response from biodiversity NGOs who are disappointed that DFID no-longer funds biodiversity projects. However, DFID's poverty alleviation agenda fits well with the apparent approach of WSSD to alleviating poverty as a fundamental precept for sustainable development;
- iv. JNCC and the country agencies should give consideration to finding ways of transferring their skills, where appropriate, to those in developing countries. JNCC has recently been approached to assist the Commonwealth Secretariat in this respect, and general discussions in international fora almost always show that the UK agencies have experience and skills that others can benefit from.

7. Committee is invited to **discuss** and **comment** on the issues raised in this paper.