



CFACT

Committee For A Constructive Tomorrow

U.N. to Mine for Global Regulatory Gems at S. African Summit

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“The world is at an environmental crossroads, where the choice between greed and humanity will decide the fate of millions of people for decades to come”

- United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)

“Earth's population will be forced to colonize two planets within 50 years if natural resources continue to be exploited at the current rate, according to a report out this week [by the World Wildlife Fund].”

- *The Observer* (of London)

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Such is the barker's call beginning to emanate from the global Green community. It concerns the U.N.'s upcoming World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. There, nearly 65,000 official delegates, environmental activists, reporters, and even Heads of State will gather from August 26 through September 4 to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the now-famous Rio Earth Summit, and further advance the U.N.'s plan for the 21st Century.

That master plan, designed to oversee everything from the world's energy and land use to population and education, is called *Agenda 21*. It is being sold as a panacea for the globe's most pressing concerns. And the public's desire for it is increasingly being whetted by an ever-loudening chorus of doomsday prognostications, certain to come to pass if the U.N. is stiff-armed in its push for “sustainable development.”

But as it turns out, it doesn't even take a jeweler's glass to see that the diamond being offered in Johannesburg is worth less than a cheap version of cubic zirconium.

Digging up a new catch phrase

To fully appreciate the significance of the Johannesburg gathering, it may be helpful to review the evolution of the concept of *sustainable development*, and further define the term as it is applied to policies now being implemented around the world, and particularly in the United States.

The term “sustainable development” entered the world officially through the 1987 World Commission on Environment and Development, headed by Gro Harlem Brundtland (who also

just happened to serve as vice chairman of the World Socialist Party). The conference report, entitled *Our Common Future*, defined sustainable development in this lofty way:

“[development which] ... meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.”

To give meaning to this obviously ambiguous phrase, the United Nations appointed none other than Maurice Strong, a Canadian businessman [and another avowed socialist] who had organized the very first U.N. conference on the environment in 1972. He was given the task of convening yet another conference at which the concept of sustainable development could be more fully defined, and then adopted by the entire world. PrepComs (a.k.a. preparatory committees) were appointed by Strong to develop the documents necessary to achieve this ambitious goal in time for the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

Shortly thereafter, *voila*, the *Agenda 21* document was born.

Agenda 21 is nearly 300 pages, divided into 40 chapters, which describe how national governments should take control of virtually every aspect of human life, including education, transportation, land use, consumption, markets, labor, and even the process of policy decision-making. These recommendations are designed to achieve sustainable development, which has now been expanded to include:

"The integration of economic development, environmental protection, and social equity."

Agenda 21 was indeed adopted in Rio de Janeiro, by 179 nations, including the United States as a non-binding, or “soft-law,” document establishing the principles and guidelines upon which stringent laws and regulations should be enacted.

Polishing up the goods

To jump-start implementation of *Agenda 21*, the PrepComs presented two formidable treaties for adoption at Rio: The U.N. Framework Convention on Climate Change; and the Convention on Biological Diversity. The United States signed and ratified the Climate Change treaty (an early, voluntary version of Kyoto), but the Convention on Biological Diversity was not signed until President Clinton came into office; whereupon the Senate refused to vote on its ratification when property rights activists stormed the Senate and complained that, if implemented, as much as half the land area of the U.S. would be returned to wilderness and placed off limits to humans.

Agenda 21 also called for the creation of so-called “national councils on sustainable development” – councils which would speed along implementation in all the participating nations. President Clinton, not surprisingly, was quick to create a President’s Council on Sustainable Development shortly after he took office. The 28-member Council, consisting primarily of Cabinet-level officials and selected leaders of environmental organizations and industry, operated through 1999. Its purpose was to incorporate into domestic policy the recommendations contained in *Agenda 21*.

Full implementation of *Agenda 21* - and the concept of sustainable development - would be a liberal’s dream come true. As epitomized in John Lennon’s song *Imagine*, it would require a wholesale transformation of society, molding all the various peoples and governments into a unified international system through which the world’s economies could be integrated with globally-monitored and enforced environmental protection, with assurance that “social equity” would be achieved.

Concurrent with *Agenda 21*, Maurice Strong, along with Mikhail Gorbachev, also launched the circulation of another document called the “Earth Charter.” This document, much like the *Communist Manifesto* was to the Soviet Union, is intended to articulate the philosophical foundation upon which *Agenda 21* is constructed. Its first principle is recognition of the equal intrinsic value of all species. Specifically, human life is of no more value, or

importance, than any other life form. While efforts were made to roll out the Earth Charter before Rio, it failed to reach the table for adoption. It now heads to Johannesburg where it awaits, perhaps, a new fate.

Closing the deal

The ten years between Rio and Johannesburg have been about introduction, education, acceptance, and restructuring for implementation. The next ten years are all about implementation.

Indeed, the 2002 Implementation Plan to be adopted in Johannesburg is supposed to be the point in history at which there is no turning back from what organizers are increasingly calling “global governance.”

New PrepComs have been meeting formally for three years, drafting agendas and documents for presentation at Johannesburg. The fourth and final PrepCom convened in Bali, Indonesia, May 27 through June 7, 2002, to prepare the final draft of a 79-page “Plan of Implementation” to be adopted in Johannesburg.

The first item in the Implementation Plan is the eradication of poverty. This goal requires the creation of a new, “World Solidarity Fund,” through which developed nations would supply the funds for the United Nations to redistribute to developing nations that transform their governments and societies to conform with the recommendations contained in *Agenda 21*.

The second item is “Changing Unsustainable Patterns of Consumption and Production,” which the document says is “indispensable for achieving global sustainable development” (the term “sustainable development” here, replaced the word “governance,” which appeared in earlier drafts). This item is aimed at developed nations, particularly, the United States.

Several pages of very specific action items include the development of a 10-year work plan to bring land and resource use under control to prevent environmental degradation. Other goals seek to establish a program of “eco-certification” for products that are sustainable (This certification program has been under development for several years). The plan calls for taxing “unsustainable” activities and subsidizing “sustainable” activities (Canada, a strong supporter of *Agenda 21*, is considering a road tax of \$.15 per mile for urban miles driven, and \$.03 per mile for inter-city driving).

Another Plan Item calls for “Protecting and Managing the Natural Resource Base.” This includes entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol, and full implementation of the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention on Desertification. These treaties would be enforced by the U.N., but implemented by national governments.

While the PrepComs met to hammer out the language in the final draft, another group of NGOs worked to promote acceptance of the Earth Charter. Cities and organizations throughout the United States, and the world, were asked to endorse the document. Many have. The document, which Green enthusiasts hope will replace the Ten Commandments, has been inscribed on parchment, placed in an ark designed to simulate the biblical Ark of the Covenant, and is being transported to Johannesburg, with the hope of getting the assembly to adopt it along with the Implementation Plan.

Overcoming minor obstacles

Since the term “Sustainable Development” first entered the scene 15 years ago, it has spread around the world, into schools, communities, and government policy. It is the politically-correct term to describe what the world’s socialists think is responsible social behavior. But no matter how much it is glossed over, the fundamental element that is

indispensable to the achievement of sustainable development is a central governing authority with the power to stifle real economic development with extreme environmental regulations and the promotion of so-called “social equity.”

Of course, neither individual freedom, nor free market capitalism, can exist if a central governing authority has the power to force both individuals and markets to comply with its dictates. The World Summit on Sustainable Development seeks to overcome both of these minor obstacles.