

Objectives of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development

Intervention

Lawrence J. Gumbiner

Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs
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The United States is pleased to participate in the PrepCom and to contribute to a successful Rio 2012 Conference on Sustainable Development. We have developed a robust process within our government to evaluate how far we have come since Rio, and to identify gaps that we need to address and emerging issues where we need to make progress. This effort is reinvigorating discussions on sustainable development within our government as we work together to identify shortcomings and replicate successes, and to avail ourselves of new science, information, technologies, and collaborations to make real progress toward achieving sustainable development.

In doing this, we increasingly understand that, while the United Nations and national governments are essential to sustainable development, our participation alone is not sufficient for achieving meaningful progress that improves people's lives and the environment. We are beginning to engage our stakeholders – including nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, local and regional governments, and academia – all of which have important contributions to make to this process.

In this vein, a concise political document should only be a part of the outcome. We also need to look to major groups and stakeholders to bring forward good ideas and take on commitments and actions. Sustainable development can only be achieved when we enable all citizens and empower all stakeholders to take action to achieve a sustainable future. We need to invest in people, recognizing women and youth as key agents of change in society. We need to promote human capacity development through education, especially in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, and to enable the development of skill sets vital to emerging sectors of the economy. development path.

The partnership approach out of the World Summit on Sustainable Development continues to be an important tool for achieving sustainable development, and we should look at how we can strengthen and further legitimize this approach. For example, our domestic policy on innovation realizes that governments can catalyze and leverage action across stakeholders, provide enabling frameworks and incentives for private sector investment, invest in people, and facilitate meaningful collaborations across all stakeholders. Together, we can address market failures, invest in sciences and innovation, develop human capacity to meet today's challenges, and adapt solutions for local contexts.

Good governance at all levels is critical to our ability to make good on our Agenda 21 commitments. While national governments will make the political commitments, we rely upon regional and local governments to implement new policies in the context of local situations, to enforce environmental regulations, to innovate and adapt solutions that will succeed in unique environmental, social, and political realities. Some of the most creative solutions to our sustainable development challenges are emerging in the U.S. from our state, regional and local governments. We should encourage communities to do integrated planning, to develop sustainability plans and a local Agenda 21.

Cities are hotspots for population growth, investment, and increasing demand for energy, water, food, buildings and waste disposal. Rapid urbanization is a challenge and an opportunity to focus our global efforts to minimize impacts from this development, to develop state-of-the-art disaster preparedness plans, to integrate planning with smarter designs, to build more livable communities and to address the needs of the poorest of the poor. With good governance and sound planning we can implement solutions that address the needs of people and promote inclusive growth that works for all strata of society. We can identify and leverage solutions to improve access to water, sanitation, food, and energy that will help us to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Chair, we support the Rio 2012 process and the need to review our progress and to identify gaps and emerging challenges. We want Rio 2012 to be forward looking, to address ways that we can learn from past struggles, build on our successes, and achieve a sustainable future. We believe that all countries should be able to monitor natural resources and make informed and integrated decisions about their development paths. We support efforts to measure progress and to share information and best practices.

Our challenges are significant. We recognize that economic growth is an essential component of any sustainable development strategy. But economic growth should not and does not need to be “development at all costs.” It should be balanced in a way that takes into consideration the environment, natural resource, and social dimensions, addressing poverty and improving the status of women. This is a challenging objective, but one toward which we are making great strides. We are committed to this process and to working with all stakeholders to identify actions we can take reinvigorate our commitments and to harness 21st century tools and human capacity to achieve sustainable development.

Thank you.