



Recommendation 1594 (2003)¹

Follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development: a common challenge

Parliamentary Assembly

1. In 1992 the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro adopted the Rio Declaration, in which environmental protection and social and economic development are designated as essential for ensuring sustainable development. A programme of action, Agenda 21, was laid down in order to achieve this development
2. Ten years later, the state of our planet is just as alarming and the results of the measures taken in Rio are disappointing. Deforestation and greenhouse gas emissions are increasing, access to water is still not secured to the majority, and the exhaustion of resources continues. The situation is scarcely better with regard to development: cases of inequality and utter destitution are on the increase. In addition, environmental problems and sustainable development are still nowhere near the top of our governments' policy action programmes.
3. The World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg from 26 August to 4 September 2002 reaffirmed the central role of sustainable development, stressing the need for global action to combat poverty and the depletion of natural resources and for active protection of the environment.
4. It is therefore a welcome fact that the summit succeeded in closely linking together, as a dual objective, the fight against environmental degradation and the eradication of poverty.
5. The Parliamentary Assembly notes with satisfaction that the summit concluded with the adoption of the anticipated texts, a political declaration and a definite programme of action setting out the priorities and the requisite measures for implementing Agenda 21.
6. An additional benefit of the summit was to unite governments, NGOs and enterprises in an extensive programme of voluntary partnerships, with the aim of furthering sustainable development at local, national and international level. Here it is important to emphasise the soundness of these partnerships, provided that they are not formed to the disadvantage of the most deprived and vulnerable populations
7. Having regard to the negative assessment made of the follow-up to the Rio Conference, it can be asserted that the Johannesburg results go beyond those obtained in Rio, in that the governments at Johannesburg decided on a number of undertakings and tangible objectives for action to achieve the goals set.
8. In this respect, the Assembly emphasises and especially welcomes those of the objectives which seek the significant reduction of the number of persons in a state of extreme poverty and of those without access to water and sanitation
9. Conversely, it regrets that the summit did not fix any objective for promoting forms of renewable energy and that, apart from fishing, the decisions in the field of biodiversity and natural resources were rather low-key.

1. Assembly debate on 30 January 2003 (7th Sitting) (see [Doc. 9659](#), report of the Committee on the Environment, Agriculture and Local and Regional Affairs, rapporteur: Mr Meale). Text adopted by the Assembly on 30 January 2003 (7th Sitting).



10. Regarding the Kyoto Protocol, it is regrettable that a small but significant number of Council of Europe member states have still not taken the step of ratifying this instrument, thereby obstructing its entry into force.

11. In other respects, it must also be acknowledged that the Johannesburg Summit made no advance towards the institutional reform needed for new world governance, which would involve a review of the role of the World Trade Organisation and the World Bank in sustainable development, and could also entail the creation of new worldwide environmental organisations. The Assembly is in fact convinced that sustainable development is to be achieved by introducing new patterns of production and consumption, which require rethinking the international economic order

12. Where the political decisions reached at Johannesburg are concerned, it is essential to realise that they will remain inoperative unless they are coupled with the tangible implementation of the action plan, which is the collective responsibility of all players involved.

13. Hence, the national parliaments and multilateral interparliamentary bodies like the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly have a duty to make their contribution, both through their legislative action and through the pressure which they can bring to bear on the governments, or again as elected representatives of civil society.

14. The Assembly proclaims its commitment to the Johannesburg process and welcomes the contacts established between the parliamentarians who attended the summit, and particularly the initiative taken in conjunction with the European Parliament to hold an interparliamentary round table. This made it possible to identify the contribution which might be made to the process and to formulate proposals.

15. The Assembly is convinced in particular that it would be worthwhile to attach greater importance to the role of parliamentarians in the future negotiations, and in this kind of summit generally. Like most of the parliamentarians who were present in Johannesburg, it feels that their contribution to the World Summit on Sustainable Development preparatory process was not adequately taken into account and that this situation must change in the future. It therefore insists that the new agreements be subject to increased parliamentary control and that parliamentarians be associated more in the implementation of the decisions taken.

16. For its part, it welcomes the proposal, made by its representatives and those of the European Parliament attending in Johannesburg, to look into the possibility of an arrangement to monitor the undertakings made by the countries in the framework of certain environmental agreements, notably the Kyoto Protocol and other commitments, in particular concerning the eradication of extreme poverty

17. In the light of the foregoing, the Parliamentary Assembly recommends that the Committee of Ministers:

17.1. take account of the decisions reached at the Johannesburg Summit and ensure that the Council of Europe intergovernmental work programme contributes to its fulfilment, particularly as regards social cohesion and environmental protection;

17.2. pinpoint the reasons why the Council of Europe Conventions on Civil Liability for Damage Resulting from Activities Dangerous to the Environment (ETS No. 150, Lugano, 1993) and on the Protection of the Environment through Criminal Law (ETS No. 172, Strasbourg, 1998) are not yet in force, and consider possible actions which might induce member states to ratify these two instruments;

17.3. ensure that the next pan-European Conference of Environment Ministers, to be held in Kyiv from 21 to 23 May 2003 and which the Council of Europe is helping to prepare, will also be placed in the context of implementing the Johannesburg programme of action and will fully appreciate the contribution which the Council of Europe can make in this context;

17.4. invite the governments of the member states to profit from the framework of co-operation offered by the Council of Europe for the partnerships established after Johannesburg, in particular by taking advantage of the project opportunities offered by the Council of Europe Development Bank