

TOWARDS A WORLD SUMMIT ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2012

**Speech by the Ambassador of Brazil
to the European Communities,
Ricardo Neiva Tavares**

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Distinguished President of the Sustainable Development Observatory of the European Economic and Social Committee, Mr Stéphane Buffetaut.

Distinguished members of the European Economic and Social Committee.

Ladies and gentlemen.

I would like to thank the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC) and the Stakeholder Forum for the invitation to open this conference on the organisation of a World Summit on Sustainable Development. As you know, Brazil is favouring that this Summit be held in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. I will elaborate on this in a while.

Before that, I would like to take the opportunity to say that it is a particular satisfaction to be here once again, where I had the honour to launch, last July, a mechanism of regular meetings between the EESC and the Brazilian Council for Economic and Social Development, in the framework of the Brazil-EU Strategic Partnership.

I am convinced that, as representatives of civil society, the EESC and its Brazilian counterpart play an important role in the discussion of ways and means to address the many challenges before us. The membership of these two bodies enables them to provide insightful contributions to these discussions.

One group of challenges put before us is precisely the reason why we are here in this seminar: the challenges of giving concrete expression to sustainable development.

In the next two days, we will be encouraged to discuss and reflect upon the critical topics that call for a review of the global agenda on “sustainable development”. A number of new concerns have arisen in the past years. At the same time, a commensurate number of new pathways to sustainable development can be in the making as we speak. We need to take stock of the tools at our disposal and assess whether and how they are able to meet our challenges. It is against this backdrop that we should view, among others, the concept of “green growth”, the question of environmental security, the appropriate framework for sustainable development governance, as well as all the issues relating to the implementation of the commitments adopted in Rio, in 1992, and in Johannesburg, in 2002.

Brazil is of the view that these topics should be dealt with by a high level conference on sustainable development, and therefore we have offered to host this conference in 2012, in Rio de Janeiro.

I will tell you now why we think this should be so. This will be followed by some words on what we envisage as possible elements to be discussed in a Rio+20 Summit. Finally, I will put forward some views on why we should start working on the preparation of this conference.

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There is strong international recognition of the need to convene a new United Nations conference on sustainable development.

The goal of sustainable development has increased in importance over the years. This is coupled with the perception that this goal is full of complexities and that the many international regimes that seek to achieve it are intertwined.

In this vein, a fresh international agenda that takes into account these complexities and cross-fertilizations is in order. And for that purpose, it is necessary to send a strong political signal that leaders stand behind a review of the sustainable development agenda. A political signal that gives clout to coherent actions, focused efforts and broad-reaching decisions in this area.

We believe that our proposal of a Rio +20 Summit in 2012 provides the opportunity for such a political signal, at the appropriate level, with the appropriate timing.

In fact, the year 2012 will mark a point in time where a number of decisions taken in the past will be ripe for examination: this is the case, for example, of several commitments undertaken in Johannesburg, in

2002. In addition, a host of decisions are expected to be adopted in the coming years on important issue-areas that have a direct impact on the goal of sustainable development: I mean, as an example, the outcomes of the discussions on climate change, in particular, the results of the Copenhagen Conference scheduled for the end of this year.

By 2012, these elements will combine to provide important inputs that will enable us not only to take stock of what will be achieved by then but also to fine-tune the instruments at our disposal in order to better accomplish the tasks put before us on the way to ensuring sustainable development. I recall, in this context, the Program of Work of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), whose timeframe reaches its end on 2017, and also the Review Conference of the Millenium Development Goals, set to take place in 2015.

In this scenario, 2012 is the timely occasion to engage in an interim review exercise. That is the reason why we view the Rio +20 Summit as not only a conference, but also a process.

Aside from these reasons, the proposed conference in 2012 would be a unique opportunity to strongly engage everyone in a more focused discussion of issues relating to sustainable development.

As you know, the proposal to hold the Rio +20 Summit was first announced by the President of Brazil, Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, at the 62nd United Nations General Assembly. This proposal met the support of the Group of 77 and China in a Ministerial Declaration presented to the 63rd UN General Assembly, in September 2008.

Since then, this initiative has also been endorsed by an increasing number of developed countries and stakeholders, including in Europe, which is a recognition of the need to convey an urgent and strong political message that the goal of sustainable development continues to merit attention at the highest political level.

I think it is worthwhile to underscore that this is the first time a World Conference on Sustainable Development is called for by developing countries. This is significant in view of the legitimacy that it adds to the proposal. We hope that delegates to the UN General Assembly take this aspect into consideration when they decide on the convening of the conference in November.

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What could a Rio +20 Summit focus on?

According to the proposal tabled by Brazil, the 2012 Conference could address four thematic clusters:

First, the Summit could review the implementation of commitments undertaken in the past.

This would mean, *inter alia*, evaluating the long-term commitments for sustainable development, including the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development; Agenda 21; the Program for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Also, attention should be given to the three Rio Conventions (Convention on Biological Diversity, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification).

The focus should be on how to bridge implementation gaps, including the provision of adequate and predictable financing.

Second, we should discuss the international governance for sustainable development.

Under this topic, it would be warranted to debate the reform of the institutions put in charge of the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in the UN system, with an emphasis on strengthening the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The *third* cluster would deal with the idea of “Green Growth”.

We need to find consensus-based, sustainable responses to the multiple crises we face now and will possibly face in the future. Considering that these crises put at risk the fulfillment of internationally agreed development goals, especially the Millenium Development Goals, we need to agree on innovative solutions to make our way out of these critical periods in a manner that does not undermine the promotion of sustainable development nor job creation and opportunities.

Brazil is aware that the concept of a “green global economy” is particularly important for Europe. We are ready to work with you on this idea with a view to incorporating it into the discussion of sustainable development.

Fourth, another topic of special concern for the European countries is the discussion on water. We think it would be important to raise it at the Rio +20 Summit. We think there is room to contribute to the implementation of national policies on water resources, thus enabling each State to fulfill its obligation towards its citizens.

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Before concluding, I would like to say a couple of words about the preparation to a high level conference on sustainable development, in 2012.

We are familiar with the concern of European countries that the preparation to a new World Summit could be a costly and long process.

We believe these concerns could be addressed if the preparatory process took place with the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD), which would meet as a preparatory committee, in parallel to the activities belonging to its 2004-17 Program of Work.

And this seems to be logical, since one of the purposes of the Rio+20 Summit is precisely to strengthen the role of the CSD in reviewing the progress in the implementation of the Agenda 21. In this sense, the preparatory process for Rio +20 could build on the work of the CSD.

But we think the preparatory process could also serve as an opportunity to *complement* the work of the CSD.

The Brazilian proposal, as backed by the G-77 and China, puts forward the suggestion to debate, in an inclusive manner, the reform of the international institutions that deal with sustainable development. In fact, this debate could pave the way to a comprehensive political declaration and to concrete policies and lines of action, with special regard to the implementation of the “green growth” paradigm.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Rio 92 Summit represented a landmark in policy-making in the area of sustainable development, among other things because it conveyed a strong political clout to the many initiatives that followed that meeting.

The world has changed since then, but the need to find agreed and sustainable solutions remains.

As in 1992, the world is again expecting leaders to shed light on possible avenues to meet our current challenges without putting in danger the goal of sustainable development.

Brazil is firmly convinced that a high level Rio +20 Summit is a timely occasion to respond to this expectation of the international community.

I wish you all a very fruitful debate on these next two days.

Thank you very much.
