Environment and sustainable development: Johannesburg World Summit 2002, 10 years after Rio

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PURPOSE : to present a communication on the preparation for the world summit on sustainable development in 2002. CONTENT : the Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992 raised considerable expectations. The international community agreed an ambitious and comprehensive strategy to address environment and development challenges through a global partnership for sustainable development. Although some progress has been achieved, the expectations have not been realised. Pressures on the environment and on the natural resource base have grown since Rio and poverty has continued to increase globally. Turning production and consumption patterns onto a sustainable path remains rhetoric rather than reality. Tackling global problems needs action from both North and South, which will only come about through politically challenging changes. Ten years after Rio, the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development will provide an opportunity to revitalise the spirit of Rio and to shape a renewed political commitment by all countries to achieving sustainable development. The EU has a responsibility to show leadership throughout preparations for the 2002 Summit and at the conference itself. With a view to ensure an effective EU contribution to the 2002 Summit, this Communication aims to set in motion a coordinated EU preparatory process,by: 1) suggesting the EU's strategic objectives and key issues for the Summit ; 2) highlighting synergies with related processes, - notably the EU sustainable development strategy, the forthcoming Environment Action Programme, the Cardiff Integration process and other related sectoral strategies (e.g. energy and transport) · as a basis for a credible and decisive EU contribution to the Summit; 3) indicating preparatory measures to take in the lead-up to the Summit. On the basis of an assessment of progress since Rio, the present Communication suggests four strategic objectives that the EU should seek to obtain through the Summit: · increased global equity and an effective partnership for sustainable development; · better integration and coherence at the international level; · adoption of environment and development targets to revitalise and sharpen the political commitment; and, · more effective action at national level, and international monitoring. The Communication also stresses the link with other processes at EU level, without prejudging their outcome, and the need to ensure that they are complementary and mutually reinforcing. The commitment at Rio+5 by all countries to have strategies for sustainable development in place by 2002 requires the EU to go to the Summit with an effective strategy. Finally, the EU needs to speed up its preparatory process. A Steering Group is proposed to champion stakeholder preparations at European level and a major public event on an assessment of the implementation of the Rio agreements so far. Support for theNGOs advocacy role for sustainable development should be enhanced.