

**Opening Remarks  
Mr. Nitin Desai  
Secretary-General for  
World Summit on Sustainable Development**

**Third Preparatory Committee for the  
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Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman it is a pleasure for me to be here at the opening of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Prepcom for the World Summit on Sustainable Development. I have come here, more or less directly, from the conclusion of the Monterrey Conference on the International Financial Development so I thought I would spend a bit of time discussing with you the implications of that meeting on the work of the WSSD.

By any standard, the Monterrey Conference was a success. It was success in many different ways. First, it was a success because after many years – close to a decade– we now have substantial commitments for an increase in ODA. The commitments that were announced there by the United States and the European Union amount to an extra \$30 billion in the three years beginning 2004 and a permanent increase of \$12 Million on an annual basis from 2006 onwards. This is perhaps one of the largest increases in development assistance that has ever been committed at any global meeting, and it must be a matter of some satisfaction to us that it was done in a United Nations meeting dealing with Finance for Development.

But that is only part of what is important with the Monterrey outcome. There are many elements in the Monterrey Consensus, which I think we should note. The Consensus places development at the center of financial policy. It is very important because it marks a meeting of minds between north and south on priorities for economic management. The central focus of the principles of economic management, which are put down in the Monterrey consensus, start with development, with development that is sustainable, that is equitable, and that addresses the key issues of poverty and marginalization.

There are many other things, which I could draw your attention to. The forward movement on the whole issue of the management of sovereign debt, the commitment to negotiate a global convention on corruption. The Monterey Consensus also signified a forward movement on policy coherence. It also expressed it self on how to keep the different institutions in the international system – the UN, the Bretton Woods institutions, and the WTO – engaged in the follow-up to Monterrey. In every way the outcomes of the Monterrey process, –the consensus itself, and the announcements that were made at the meeting – constitute a major success. We have had therefore two major successes -- in Doha and in Monterrey. And I would include in this count, the success that was achieved in Marrakech in the conclusion of the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.

This therefore poses an important challenge for the WSSD process. In Monterrey, everybody, almost without exception, referred to the WSSD as the crucial third step in this process. Having put development into the trade agenda in Doha, having put development into the finance agenda in Monterrey, and having secured certain major commitments of additional ODA, the challenge now is to get agreement on how, in very practical terms, all of this is going to be used in order to promote sustainable and equitable development.

There are also lessons that I draw from the Monterrey process, which I think we should note for the WSSD. As you know, in the case of Monterrey, the agreement between governments was finalized before the summit itself, and the focus of the summit therefore was very much on what would happen in the high-level meeting. Many people thought that this was in some ways a big compromise – that in some way agreement had been secured sooner than it had to be, why could we not wait until Monterrey. In practice, however, it turned out to be a very positive feature, because the focus in Monterrey was so completely on what the assembled ministers and heads of state were going to say and do in order to pursue effective implementation of the Monterrey consensus. And that is what led to many of the results. I urge you to keep this in mind – that we must treat summit meetings as summit meetings. Not just a continuation of a negotiating process. Do not get me wrong, we have to have the negotiating process; we have to have that agreement amongst governments. But that is just a starting point of a summit. Those of you who participated in the Monterrey meeting also know that the spotlight that we could give to the high-level meetings, the plenaries, as well as the round tables, was a very positive achievement in terms of what the world outside was focusing attention on. The world outside was not focusing attention on disputes taking place in some basement about one word here or there. No, the world was focusing attention on what the political leadership of the world was saying and doing at Monterrey about financing for development.

Monterrey was also a meeting that involved an effort at bringing together governments and other actors. Certainly, as far as the business sector is concerned, it was very visible. And there were several initiatives that the business sector launched. The non-governmental organizations were not entirely satisfied with the product, not because of the process, not because of what the UN did, but they continue to feel that some of their concerns about liberalization and about globalization were not fully taken into account in the consensus or in the subsequent discussions, and this will remain a matter to be addressed. I believe we can address this, because many of their concerns are substantive concerns about the nature of development –how equitable it is–how sustainable it is. Monterrey was not addressing the substance of development. It is our task to address this at Johannesburg in a manner that is practical, effective and capable of immediate implementation.

So the lesson that we learnt from Monterrey is that there is a way of handling this process which can generate results, both through the inter-governmental agreed text and what that text engenders in terms of other actions, which may be of a voluntary character.

Mr. Chairman let me turn to what is the challenge before this meeting of the Preparatory Committee. You have before you of course the Chairman's Paper, and one of your challenges is to see to it that by the end of two weeks we have a text that is fleshed out, reflects the views of member states, and which can be translated into implementable programs of action. This will

mean that you will have to address issues of goals, targets, activities, and resources when you talk about the elements, which are there in the Chairman's Paper, what some people have referred to as the Type 1 outcomes. But I urge you to keep in mind that the mandate of the Johannesburg process is clear, it is not to renegotiate Agenda 21. Its purpose is not another statement of general policies on sustainable development. Its purpose is agreement on concrete programs of action to implement what has been agreed already in Agenda 21 and the subsequent elaborations which have taken place in the CSD follow-up process.

There are also two other items on your agenda that I, in particular, want to draw your attention to. One is the element that the Chairman has already alluded to, namely the discussions that have taken place under the notion of partnerships, what is now by some called Type 2 initiatives. These initiatives, these partnerships cannot be at the expense of clear, firm, goal-oriented agreements among governments. They are not meant to be a diversion from what governments must agree upon. Given the resources that are now in sight after Monterrey, I believe that it is very important that we address this issue of what it is that governments should agree upon here as far as the Type 1 programs are concerned.

Here I would like to draw your attention to one particular dimension. In Monterrey, a great deal of political energy was focused on these resources being used to serve the Millennium Development goals – the goals which relate to poverty eradication, the goals which relate to education, to health and a variety of other matters. One of the challenges that we face both in the Type 1 and Type 2 outcomes is to link Millennium goals with more specific goals that we may have in particular programs. For instance, in the program dealing with desertification or the programs dealing with water, which will directly address the issue of how the productivity of poor people can be enhanced through effective public and partnership actions. How the quality of water, sanitation and air can be enhanced so that major health objectives, which are there in the Millennium Declaration, can be achieved. And a variety of other matters where we can connect the types of issues which are talked about in Agenda 21 very directly with the Millennium goals.

Let me turn now to the so-called Type 2 outcomes. I would stress that the partnership initiatives, the Type 2 outcomes, are not independent of what governments agree. Clearly, the policy framework, the policy objectives, their orientation has to be derived from what governments agree. They are basically meant to do two things – leverage additional resources and change the quality of implementation by bringing the types of technological, managerial and financial resources, which may be available among the partners, to bear on a particular problem. Also to change the quality of implementation by a much more direct association with the program countries and the communities where the programs will be implemented. Partnership can give the people who have to implement the program at the field level, at the community level, at the local level, at the national level, a far more direct involvement in the design of policies and programs that are going to guide the deployment of financial and technical resources. It is not simply a matter of leveraging resources through the corporate sector or philanthropic foundations, which is important, but also a matter of giving those who implement programs a much more direct involvement in the whole process. I think it is very important that we understand what these partnership initiatives are all about. I hope therefore that in your

discussions, you can say something more definite to the potential partners on what is it that we are expecting in Johannesburg.

And what can we expect?

We have about four months left before Johannesburg –if we are realistic, it will be difficult to have fully worked out partnerships in every area ready and available for announcement in Johannesburg. These are voluntary initiatives of groups of countries along with the private sector, philanthropic foundations, of NGOs, of community associations. What I hope is for those who are developing these initiatives to announce statements of intent in Johannesburg. That is, for a group of partners to make known that this is what we hope to do– these are our basic goals– this is how they are connected with what the governments have agreed to– and it is our intention over the next following months to work out a full-fledged memorandum of understanding or whatever other form that partnership is going to take. In certain cases, they may be more fully worked out and the announcement can be made there. These will remain voluntary initiatives, but one of the questions that you will have to ask, is what will be the subsequent role of whatever follow-up mechanism you prepare for Johannesburg with in respect to these initiatives.

Let me turn to a second issue. You will be addressing, perhaps for the first time in this meeting the issue of governance. You are required to address this at the 3<sup>d</sup> Prepcom. The dimension of governance dealing with environmental governance is something that has been discussed in the process set up in UNEP and I will not elaborate on this because Dr. Töpfer will be reporting on that matter a little later.

I really want to focus on sustainable development governance. I believe the centerpiece of that for the past decade has been the Commission of Sustainable Development. It has had significant achievements to its credit. It is a Commission that has worked in many innovative ways. In fact, the Commission is responsible for many of the innovations in the way in which the UN political process works. It has continued to attract a high level of interest from capitals. A typical meeting of CSD has 50 plus ministers, and particularly in the past five years, at least a quarter of those ministers have been ministers who are not environment ministers but ministers of other subjects, sectoral subjects like energy, agriculture or forest, or even in certain cases, economic ministers, and in several cases, finance ministers, of course development cooperation ministers have been regular participants in this process.

Second, it has established an innovative way of interacting with stakeholders through the dialogue process. Third, it has had a strong inter-agency process guiding it. It is one of the few intergovernmental bodies that is truly serviced by the entire system and that too in a very visible way. I believe in a broad sense the CSD has succeeded in keeping the issue of sustainable development on the policy agenda. But we must also recognize that there are weak spots in this whole exercise. One of the weak spots surely is that it has not been able to generate sufficient pressure for effective implementation. There are many reasons for this. Part of the reason is that much of the responsibility for implementation rests at the national level, and the national reporting system for Agenda 21 is voluntary. It has not generated sufficient pressure because of the fact that its links with implementing organizations, which deploy resources, have been weak.

I believe the stakeholder dialogue needs to be strengthened. So far, it has focused very much on policy development, but if the partnership initiatives are to take off, then certainly the stakeholders will also be involved in the process of implementation. And in all of these respects we need to re-think the way in which we work at this global level. There are some tentative suggestions I would like put before you, more in the way of thinking aloud rather than as formal proposals.

First, I believe that we could look more carefully at the whole issue of the links between the Commission and regional processes. I believe that the sharing of experiences, which we have tried to encourage in the CSD context, may be more effective if it is done at the regional or sub-regional level. It may be more candid, it may be more effective, and it may be more relevant for countries. Could we design a process where self-defined regional groups undertake the responsibility for this type of sharing of experiences between countries in the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg outcome? A consolidated review could come to the CSD. For this purpose, from the UN side, we will continue to support such regional and sub-regional processes through the regional commissions, through the regional offices of our global organizations. There are, of course, certain dimensions of a global character, which would continue to be reviewed at the CSD level.

A second change could be to strengthen the links from the implementation side, we could think in terms of introducing into the CSD a segment that is an explicit dialogue between the CSD and the development finance institutions, both global as well as regional. How do we use the ad hoc intersessional groups that we currently have? Could they be thought of as groups whose primary focus is going to be on the review of implementation both of the Type 1 as well as those Type 2 outcomes, which need to be looked at in CSD? How do we handle the Stakeholder Dialogue, taking into account that many of the stakeholders now will, hopefully, be involved directly in the processes of implementation? I believe you have to start addressing some of these questions because an institution like the CSD, in some ways, has to reinvent itself – as it is not an institution with a big program of its own. It is basically a commission that can influence others, but does not directly manage or control anything. I urge you to start addressing this broader issue of sustainable development governance, as you are required to. The ideas that I have put forward here today are not formal proposals; they are meant more to stimulate discussion on the key issues that we need to address.

Mr. Chairman let me now end by saying that I believe that the processes that we have had over the past six months have shown a new atmosphere of North-South interaction. We saw this in Monterrey and in Doha, a genuine willingness to address issues and finding common ground. We should use this atmosphere of working for accommodation to get out of the Johannesburg process, the type of credible output that would convince the world that we have devised an effective mechanism for implementing many of the major policies that we have agreed over the past decade from Rio onwards.

We talk of political will. Yesterday, at a meeting somebody said “Political will is when the public tells the politicians — you will!” I believe this is what is happening. Our public in all our countries wants us to get together, and want us to address these problems. I see this also in the strength and energy of the civil society movement preparing for Johannesburg. What we

need to do is to bring into our intergovernmental process the same dedication and commitment that the civil society organizations are showing in preparing for Johannesburg. With this, we can truly come out of Johannesburg with a sense that over this year we have defined a framework for a new multilateralism, which really promises a better life for all of the people in the world.

I thank you very much.