



**RIO+20**  
United Nations  
Conference on  
Sustainable  
Development

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil • June 2012

the  
future  
we  
want →

[www.uncsd2012.org](http://www.uncsd2012.org)



“Rio+20 will be one of the most important global meetings on sustainable development in our time. At Rio, our vision must be clear: a sustainable green economy that protects the health of the environment while supporting achievement of the Millennium Development Goals through growth in income, decent work and poverty eradication.”

United Nations  
Secretary-General  
**Ban Ki-moon**

## What is **Rio+20**?



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**Rio+20** — the short name for the **United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development** to take place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012 — is a historic opportunity to define pathways to a safer, more equitable, cleaner, greener and more prosperous world for all.

Twenty years after the **1992 Earth Summit in Rio**, where countries adopted **Agenda 21** — a blueprint to rethink economic growth, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection — the UN is again bringing together governments, international institutions and major groups<sup>1</sup> to agree on a range of smart measures that can reduce poverty while promoting decent jobs, clean energy and a more sustainable and fair use of resources.

**Rio+20** is a chance to move away from business-as-usual and to act to end poverty, address environmental destruction and build a bridge to the future.

Sustainable development is “*development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*”

Brundtland Commission (1987)

<sup>1</sup> Agenda 21 defines nine major groups: women; children and youth; indigenous peoples; NGOs; local authorities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; the scientific and technical community; and farmers.

# Why do we need **Rio+20?**



UN Photo

Half of humanity now lives in cities and within two decades, nearly 60 per cent of the world's population — 5 billion people — will be urban dwellers. (source: UN-HABITAT)

- ▶ The world now has **7 billion people** — by 2050, there will be 9 billion.
- ▶ One out of every five people — 1.4 billion — currently lives on **\$1.25 a day or less**.
- ▶ A billion and a half people in the world do not have access to electricity. Two and a half billion do not have a toilet. And almost a billion go **hungry** every day.
- ▶ Greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, and more than a third of all known species could go extinct if **climate change** continues unchecked.
- ▶ If we are to leave a **liveable world** to our children and grandchildren, the challenges of widespread poverty and environmental destruction need to be tackled now.
- ▶ We will incur far **greater costs** in the future — including more poverty and instability, and a degraded planet — if we fail to adequately address these critical challenges now.
- ▶ **Rio+20** provides an opportunity to **think globally**, so that we can all act locally to secure our common future.

*“Sustainable development is not an option! It is the only path that allows all of humanity to share a decent life on this, one planet. **Rio+20** gives our generation the opportunity to choose this path.”*

**Sha Zukang,**  
Secretary-General of the Rio+20 Conference





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# What issues will **Rio+20** tackle?

Solutions for many sustainable development problems — including challenges related to cities, energy, water, food and ecosystems — are known.

At **Rio+20**, countries will seek ways to make them a reality by:

A family in Mongolia uses a solar panel to generate power for their tent

Fishermen in the ocean near Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

UN Photo



UN Photo



Middelgrunden offshore wind farm in Denmark

► Making the transition to **greener economies** while focusing on **poverty eradication**.

► Protecting our **oceans** from over-fishing, the destruction of marine ecosystems and the adverse effects of climate change.

► Making our **cities** more liveable and more efficient.

► Broadening the use of renewable **energy** sources that can significantly lower carbon emissions as well as indoor and outdoor pollution, while promoting economic growth.

UN Photo



A train snakes its way through Seoul, Republic of Korea



*“The sustainable development agenda is the growth agenda for the 21st century.”*

United Nations Secretary-General  
**Ban Ki-moon**

► Better **managing forests** to provide a broad range of benefits — reducing **deforestation** by half through 2030 could avoid an estimated US\$ 3.7 trillion in climate change damages from greenhouse gas emissions — and that’s not counting the value of jobs and income, biodiversity, clean water and medicines provided by forests.

► Improving the way we conserve and manage our **water** resources, in order to promote development and guard against desertification.

Forests in Liberia

Dry riverbed in Niger



# Does sustainable development work?

Over the last two decades, there have been many examples of successful sustainable development in fields such as energy, agriculture, urban planning, and production and consumption:

- In Kenya, innovative finance mechanisms have stimulated new investments in **renewable energy** sources, including solar, wind, small hydro, biogas and municipal waste energy, generating income and employment.
- In China, steps to shift to a **low-carbon growth** strategy based on the development of renewable energy sources have created jobs, income and revenue streams for promising low-carbon industries.
- In Uganda, a transition to **organic agriculture** has generated revenue and income for smallholder farmers and benefited the economy, society and environment.
- In Brazil, a project under the Clean Development Mechanism was adopted in Sao Paulo to transform two of the city’s biggest waste dumpsites into **sustainable landfills**. From 2004 to September 2011, the landfills have avoided the release into the atmosphere of 352,000 tons of methane, which instead have been used to produce over one million megawatts of electricity.
- In Nepal, **community forestry** — led by local forest user groups — contributed to restoring forest resources after a steady decline in the 1990s.
- In Canada, EcoLogo — one of North America’s most respected environmental certification marks — has promoted thousands of products that meet rigorous **environmental standards**.
- In France, an estimated 90,000 **jobs** were created in **green sectors** between 2006 and 2008, mostly in the fields of energy conservation and the development of renewable energy.
- In Haiti, the Côte Sud Initiative is expected to benefit an estimated 205,000 people through the **recovery** and sustainable development of a severely **degraded land** area about half the size of Greater London.





UN Photo

Electric vehicles finishing a Zero Emissions Race in Geneva, Switzerland. Transportation is expected to be the major driving force behind a growing world demand for energy. It is the largest end-use of energy in developed countries and the fastest growing one in most developing countries.

(source: DESA)



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## What will happen at **Rio+20**?

**Thousands of participants** from governments, the private sector, NGOs and other stakeholders will gather in Rio at the end of May and beginning of June 2012 for a strong push towards sustainable development.

The last session of the Preparatory Committee for the Conference and the actual conference will take place there in June 2012.

In parallel with and between the official events, there will be numerous side events, exhibitions, presentations, fairs and announcements by a wide range of partners.

The official discussions will focus on **two main themes**: How to build a green economy to achieve sustainable development and lift people out of poverty, including support for developing countries that will allow them to find a green path for development; and how to improve international coordination for sustainable development.

Governments are expected to adopt clear and focused practical measures for implementing sustainable development, based on the many examples of success we have seen over the last 20 years.

# How can I participate or contribute?

It takes more than governments to build sustainable development — partnerships among people, community groups, organizations, businesses and academia are needed. **Rio+20** is a major opportunity to form partnerships and to highlight work by all stakeholders. The official website [www.uncsd2012.org](http://www.uncsd2012.org) provides a platform for civil society, business, academia and NGOs to share their preparatory activities for **Rio+20**. Information on how to register to attend the Conference will also be posted.

Also check the website to sign up for a newsletter, follow **Rio+20** on Twitter and Facebook, and read the blog by Conference Secretary-General Sha Zukang.

Monetary and in-kind contributions are needed from donor organizations to fund the participation of all stakeholders in the preparatory process for the Conference. For more information on how to contribute, please contact:

Ms. Kathleen Abdalla  
Chief, Fundraising and Logistics Cluster  
UNCSD (Rio+20) Secretariat,  
Division for Sustainable Development,  
UN DESA, New York  
Tel: +1 212 963 8416  
Email: [abdallak@un.org](mailto:abdallak@un.org)



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## How is **Rio+20** being organized?

**Rio+20** is a joint endeavour of the entire UN System. A dedicated Secretariat is responsible for coordinating and facilitating inputs to the preparatory process from all UN bodies.

The **Rio+20 Secretariat** is housed in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs and headed by Conference Secretary-General **Sha Zukang**, who is supported by two Executive Coordinators: **Elizabeth Thompson** (former Minister of Environment of Barbados) and Ambassador **Brice Lalonde** (Former Minister of Environment of France).

The preparatory process is led by an 11-member Bureau composed of UN Ambassadors from all regions of the world.

The host country, Brazil, is leading the logistical preparations on the ground.



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*“Around the world,  
sustainable peace must  
be built on sustainable  
development. That is  
why I have said that the  
sustainable development  
agenda is the agenda  
for the 21st century.”*

United Nations  
Secretary-General  
**Ban Ki-moon**

CONTACTS

**Rio+20 Secretariat:**  
[uncsd2012@un.org](mailto:uncsd2012@un.org)

**Media:**  
UN Department of  
Public Information  
[mediainfo@un.org](mailto:mediainfo@un.org)

