

# Prepare now for Rio+20



INTERNATIONAL PRESENTATION ASSOCIATION

*An Invitation to Presentation Sisters,  
Associates and Colleagues  
June to December 2011*



## The Road to Rio+20

### Rio 1992

The assembled leaders signed the *Convention on Climate Change* and the *Convention on Biodiversity*, endorsed the *Rio Declaration* and the *Forest Principles* and adopted *Agenda 21*.

The Commission on Sustainable Development was created to monitor and report on the implementation of the Earth Summit agreements.

In **1997** the United Nations General Assembly took stock of how well countries, international organizations and sectors of civil society had responded to the challenges of the Earth Summit.

In **September 2007** at the end of the historic climate change meeting in Bali the then President of Brazil, Liuz Inacio Lula da Silva said, "I propose that we hold a new conference, in 2012, to be hosted by Brazil: the Rio+20 Conference." An added significance of 2012 is that it is when the Kyoto Protocol to the UNFCCC which contains legally binding targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is set to expire.

In **Nairobi 2011**, Achim Steiner, Under Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director said, "The world is again on the Road to Rio, nearly 20 years after the Earth Summit that has defined humanity's response to sustainable development over the intervening years."

On **March 8 2011**, Sha Zukang, Secretary General of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in New York said, "**Rio+20 is humanity's chance to commit to a transition to a green economy, to lift people out of poverty. We cannot wait another 20 years.**"

### REFLECTION ...

Considering our IPA Directions for Mission ...

***We will address the root causes of poverty especially by confronting personal and corporate greed ...***

**What personal challenges do the words of Secretary General Sha Zukang hold for you?**

### Purpose of RIO+20

Rio+20 aims to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges.

### Rio+20 will focus on two themes ...

A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

and

The international structures to promote sustainable development.

### ACTION ...

Check the following websites to discover where your Government stands in relation to the commitments it made at these Conferences ...

[www.wri.org/greeneconomy](http://www.wri.org/greeneconomy)

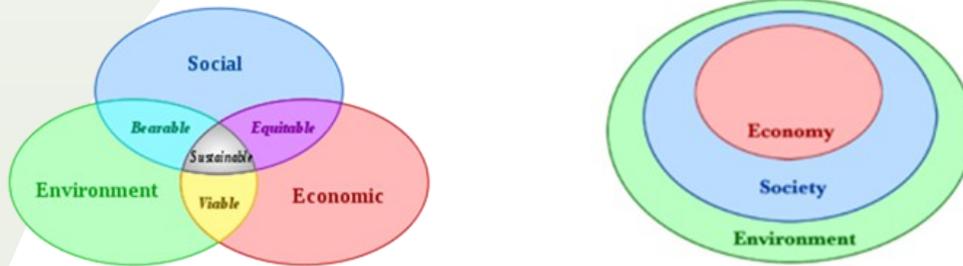
[www.uncsd2012.org](http://www.uncsd2012.org)

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

# A Moment of Opportunity

## — can we, the people of the Earth, seize it?

Rio+20 presents a moment of opportunity in the wake of the past decades which have seen **economic crises, social disparities** with one fifth of the population consuming 80% of the Earth's resources, and **environmental disasters** including food scarcity, water shortage, loss of biodiversity and natural disasters. These three pillars of sustainable development: the economic, the social and the environmental, and the inter-relationship between them, all point to the urgent need for a new paradigm – a green economy – one that strikes a harmonious balance between social and environmental rights and sound economic principles.



The three circles enclosed within one another (right) show how both economy and society are subsets of our planetary ecological system. This view is useful for correcting the misconception, sometimes drawn from the previous "three pillars" diagram (left), that portions of social and economic systems can exist independently from the environment. (cf The Global Green Center)

## The Green Economy

The concept of a green economy has gained currency largely because it provides a response to the multiple crises of recent times: the climate, food crises and economic crises.

No universally acceptable definition of a 'green economy' has been resolved at this time, however the United Nations Environment Programme 2011 defines a green economy as:

*one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.*

The World Resources Institute says,

*A Green Economy promotes a triple bottom line: sustaining and advancing economic, environmental and social well-being.* (www.wri.org)

Depending on the perspective of the argument, green economy can be seen as solely an economic issue or solely as an environmental one or often one which places economic gains before the environment and sees the environment as a commodity to be expended without consideration of the long-term consequences.

The theme '**a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication**', chosen by the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (RIO+20), **carries the promise of a new**

**economic growth paradigm that is friendly to the Earth's ecosystems and can also contribute to poverty alleviation, thus being truly sustainable.**

SOME GUIDING PRINCIPLES when considering a green economy include:

- its holistic character, that is, how it encompasses the three pillars of development: economic, social and environmental
- its inter-generational equity: it looks to the short and long-term implications of decisions made in the present and for future generations
- its common but differentiated responsibilities:
  - \* **developed countries** have to take the lead in changing their production and consumption patterns
  - \* **developing countries** maintain their development goals but do so while adopting sustainable practices
  - \* **that the developed countries** commit to enable and support the developing countries' sustainable development through finance, technology transfer and appropriate reforms to the global economic and financial structures. (cf. *The Transition to a Green Economy: Benefits, Challenges and Risks from a Sustainable Development Perspective*, Jose Antonio Ocampo; Columbia University)

**REFLECTION ...**

The Principle 'One size fits all' does not apply when considering a green economy. Discuss the stance your country takes on a green economy. Who does it favour? Who stands to gain? Do industries? Corporations? People living in poverty? Your environment? Each of these?

**ACTION ...**

Write to the representative of your country who will be attending Rio+20 and your Environment Minister to suggest the principles you would like to see underpinning your country's position on a green economy which respects the three pillars of sustainable development.

## The Theme of International Environmental Governance

At present there are a number of entities within the UN structure which work independently for a more sustainable environment. This present structure creates inefficiency, overlaps and gaps.

In preparation for Rio+20, extensive work is being undertaken across many sectors, by governments and by a multitude of civil society groups, to ensure a more cohesive and coordinated structure is created to advance the outcomes of Rio+20.

The issue is a complex one with many vested interests. There are some trans-boundary problems which cannot be solved by any one country alone. The global effect of forest degradation or atmospheric pollution are the concern of all and require global coordination, negotiation and implementation.

Other issues such as water management falls under the jurisdiction of national or local authorities.

Whatever governance emerges from the Rio+20 discussions can be critiqued on a simple formula:

**Is it a triple win?** for the Economic **AND** Social **AND** Environmental pillars which make a sustainable society.

Many words but little action!

The talkfest over the years ...

*The Stockholm Declaration ... The Rio Declaration ...  
Johannesburg Declaration ... Earth Charter ...  
Copenhagen ... Bali*

Nearly 20 years from Rio 1992 we face a paradox...

### ... THERE HAS BEEN MUCH TALK BUT LITTLE ACTION.

However, solutions **are** available, affordable technologies are being invested in and deforestation can be stopped — **but there is not sufficient political will!**

#### How can we raise our voices to make a difference?

Sustainable development can be resolved by wholesale transformation of the world's values systems, its economic practices and its mode of governance at all levels.

**REFLECT and SHARE ...**

As Presentation people we have had many challenges to question our lifestyles over the past years.

*Share the particular adjustments you and your household have made to respond to the concern we share for our Planet home?*

**ACTION ...**

As a response to Rio+20, in what further ways can you personally and as a member of the Presentation family take action to ensure a more sustainable world that respects the rights of each human person and the right of our Planet home?

*Can you lobby your Government to let them know your hopes for RIO+20?  
You may include these points:*

*We must overcome poverty...*

*We must re-establish balance within the Earth system...*

# “THE NATURAL WORLD IN ITS MOST PROFOUND SENSE OF MYSTERY IS A MANIFESTATION AND EXPERIENCE OF THE SACRED ”

As individuals, as institutions, as a people, we need a change of heart to preserve and protect the planet for now and for future generations.

*For this prayer time pictures and symbols and quiet music may be used at all stages to help reflection.*

**Suggested Song:** *Touch the Earth* (Kathy Sherman)

## Opening Prayer

Gracious God, as we prepare for Rio+20 you call us to be in solidarity – through our prayer and lifestyles – with people adversely affected by climate change in all parts of the world.

We recognize that Earth will only be our home as long as we learn to respect and care for the whole community of life and learn humility about our place in it. Strengthen us in our efforts to take action to protect and restore the integrity of life systems, as we work for sustainable development for all people.

Create in us a new mind-set which will change our hearts and fill them with a burning desire for your ‘kin-dom’ where you live and reign forever and ever, Amen.

**Reading:** *Interdependence*

We cannot have well humans on a sick planet. We cannot have a viable human economy by devastating the Earth’s economy. We cannot survive if the conditions of life itself are not protected... As the natural world diminishes in its splendour so human life diminishes in its fulfilment of both the physical and spiritual aspects of our being. Not only is it in the case of humans, but with every mode of being. The well being of each member of the Earth community is dependent on the well being of the Earth itself. (Thomas Berry)

**PAUSE...** What **WORDS** strike you in this passage?

## Rejoicing in the gifts of creation

*(Pictures of various aspects of nature can be displayed)*

**Leader:** God, eternal Father and loving Creator of Nature, we give thanks for life because you have given of yourself and created out of love.

**Response:** We give you thanks, O God.

**Leader:** For your spirit that rested on the waters, and your word that formed the sun, the moon, the stars. *R.*

**Leader:** For the Earth, humble, small and beautiful, a prelude of what would be. *R.*

**Leader:** For the skies above, that give the Earth water and light. *R.*

**Leader:** For the colours and sounds of plants, fruits and flowers, insects and fish and mammals of all sizes and kinds. *R.*

**Leader:** For human beings, male and female, whom you made in your image and likeness, and whom you gifted in so many ways. *R.*

**Reflection and Sharing:** *Share and reflect ... where in God’s creation do I feel most at home? Which aspect of*

*destruction disturbs me most? Where am I drawn most to care?*

**Asking forgiveness...** Our mistreatment of the natural world diminishes our own dignity and sacredness, not only because we are destroying resources that future generations of humans need, but because we are engaging in actions that contradict what it means to be human.

- For our increased dependence on and waste of energy, preferring cars to public transport, using electricity needlessly. Forgive us Lord.
- For our waste of water when 2/3 of the world lives with water stress and scarcity. Forgive us Lord.
- For our lack of concern about global warming which is now putting all forms of life at risk through flooding, drought and its consequence, and food scarcity. Forgive us Lord.
- For our part in the destruction and mismanagement of forests, our failure to recognise their services and value and being wasteful of paper etc. Forgive us Lord.
- For our failure to be keep informed about the consequences of our actions and to speak out against injustice. Forgive us Lord.

Enduring God, hear our prayer, forgive our faults and strengthen our resolve to care for your gifts of creation in the world as we experience them.

**Responding:** To move forward we must recognise that in the midst of a magnificent diversity of cultures and life forms we are one family and one Earth community with a common destiny. We must join together to bring forth a sustainable global society founded on respect for nature, universal human rights, economic justice and a culture of peace.

**In silence** let us make our individual response to what we have shared.

## Concluding Prayer and Commitment

O God, Creator of all the Earth, you have gifted us with a wondrous planet home. Never let us lose our love for our land which is our mother. Help us to protect the land from abuse and to enrich the soil when we abuse it. May this new time excite our hearts, kindle in our minds a creativity to journey beyond the old limits of all that is wearisome to make our mother, the Earth, fruitful again.

Let us renew our commitment to work together to bring about the changes we pray for, to reject everything that is harming the creation, to alter the way we think and thus drastically to alter the way we live.

We make our prayer in Jesus’ name. Amen.