

PrepComm II Closing Address – 31 January 2002
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I speak on behalf on Business Action for Sustainable Development (BASD) and the South African Business Co-ordinating Forum. We wish to congratulate the Chair for providing time for all stakeholders to express their views.

Business and its activities touch the lives of all people. We can choose to remain static in our ways and thereby risk extinction. However, collectively business sees the imperative to continually re-invent and re-evaluate its business practices.

Sustainability, almost unheard of two decades ago, is now a mainstream business issue- as pointed out in our opening address, it makes good business sense.

The past two days have seen lively discussion by all stakeholders on significant issues. The most important message to emerge is that there are areas of convergence. In this regard major stakeholders have identified, amongst others, sound governance, transparency, accountability, level playing field, protection of human rights, the environment, sustainable consumption and labour standards as core issues.

The global compact captures these principles and it is a good starting point. However, this is not enough. To be effective sustainability must be coupled with the globalisation agenda. This forms a sound foundation for equitable globalisation, trade liberalisation and responsible entrepreneurship. In this regard, we welcome the Secretary-General's report and support in seeking to harness the potential of globalisation as a positive force for sustainable development. Globalisation may be viewed as a product of scientific and technological advances, many of which have been market-driven. Yet governments, particularly those in the developed world have, in partnership with the private sector, played an important role in shaping its form, content and course. The question is, how do we turn the powerful forces of globalisation into a force for global good – a force for global equity, redress and sustainability. The case for national authorities and private institutions in guiding the globalisation agenda along a sustainable path and, therefore, one in which its benefits are more equally spread, remains strong. It is felt that a

major outcome of the World Summit should be a mobilisation of global political, business and community will around a global partnership for sustainability. The challenges of sustainability are too vast for any individual sector to handle alone. A partnership of governments, UN, business, labour and civil society needs to be established to address the needs of global society

Governments must recognize the increasing role of FDI in the economic and social development of developing countries. Governments must be the driving forces for seeking potential synergies between ODA and sources of private investment. Such programmes can be used to bridge the current divide between sustainable development and globalisation.

We have heard the views of the major groups and will be the champions in conveying this to leaders of enterprises throughout the world - because ultimately the actions that will lead to sustainability development becoming a reality must be implemented by individual companies, and the communities in which they operate. We represent a major catalyst for change in the current ways of the world. Yes, we need, clothing, homes, food, energy, but collectively we can and must re-define ourselves. In a dynamically evolving world, the imperative for new partnerships is even more critical, if we are to survive as a human race.

We propose that concrete projects form the basis of this partnership. These projects could be the basis for a global legacy whilst ensuring specific programmes are implemented in developing countries – especially in Africa. The New Partnership for Africa's Development, NEPAD, is a good example of such specific programmes. NEPAD highlights issues around infrastructure development, primary health care, AIDS, access to energy and education as precursors to sustainable development. I would in particular like to emphasise the role to be played by energy in alleviating poverty globally – access to advanced forms of energy, especially electricity, is an essential enabler to economic, social and environmental sustainability.

The business sector is poised to be a key partner in putting this globe on the path to sustainability. If we are to progress from debate to action, then let us forge these partnerships and create an enduring legacy from the World Summit for Sustainable development. We now need to take forward the ideas we have discussed through the rest of this Prepcom and onwards to the Summit. Dialogue between governments and all major groups must continue throughout and business will continue to play its full part.