

The sustainable development agenda is faced with a “crisis in implementation”. This is openly acknowledged by everyone, including governments. Restoring political will to implement political and legal commitments under the entire package of UN programmes from Rio to Durban as well as multilateral environmental agreements must be the priority of the WSSD. “Type 1” outcomes are thus primary and governments must strengthen their role and fulfil their obligations and commitments to implement sustainable development. The renewed political commitment to development assistance in Monterrey (though small in amount and the Consensus document was weak in many respects), was a significant shift.

The WSSD must provide the momentum for a similar renewed political commitment for the sustainable development agenda, and even move beyond the Monterrey Consensus to meet the full challenges of implementation.

Type 2 outcomes can be valuable and there are many examples that exist locally, nationally, regionally and even globally. They take place anyway, and will continue to do so. But these do not and cannot replace government commitments and obligations. The WSSD must first and foremost be about implementation of government commitments. Initiatives by other parts of society complement and supplement the fulfilment of government commitments. A historic North-South partnership was forged, and two major conventions agreed upon as well. That is the partnership that needs full activation.

**Therefore, the Explanatory note by the Chairman of the PrepCom on Partnerships/Initiatives raises a number of questions and concerns among a large number of NGOs, women’s organisations and indigenous peoples’ groups.**

### **An exercise of legitimacy**

The emphasis on Type 2 outcomes is the direct result of the failure of governments to turn their commitments to action. While collaboration and cooperation among different parts of society among themselves, and also with governments are not new, and have often produced positive results, the current emphasis is on private-public sector partnerships, especially those involving transnational corporations. This seems to be another gust in the prevailing wind from the UN concerning partnership that is biased towards private sector cooperation.

Leaving the modalities (including monitoring arrangements) to each partnership essentially means self-regulation. Yet in the wake of currency speculation, Enron and Arthur-Andersen the reality is that regulation of corporations is essential, and multilateral monitoring and surveillance are crucial. By launching these new initiatives at the WSSD, the UN at the highest political and institutional level risk conferring legitimacy without any accountability framework.

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<sup>1</sup> **The Sustainable Development Issues Network (SDIN) is an issues network to assist NGOs to work towards the WSSD. It is facilitated by the Alliance of Peoples for Environment and Development (ANPED), Environmental Liaison Centre International (ELCI) and Third World Network.**

### **Unequal relations with business and industry**

While the CSD and other international processes have increased non-governmental participation to some extent, there is a false assumption that civil society organisations and the business sector can sit at roundtables to reach consensus. Often, the interests of industry (especially global corporations) and communities (and their organisations) are diametrically opposed. Mechanisms are needed to deal with such conflicts, with governments taking a crucial role in being a fair and just arbiter of these conflicts. By promoting partnerships and initiatives, that may disregard these inequalities and even conflicts, the WSSD risks the sidelining of conflicts of interests at the costs of local communities. Since monitoring is essentially voluntary, how can the effects and results be independently assessed and verified? Again, the WSSD risks giving legitimacy to activities that are environmentally and socially damaging. The initiative on mining that is underway is one example of potential conflict.

Some of the past and current experience of UN partnerships with business and industry also causes great concern among many NGOs. There are many initiatives that are questionable. The Global Compact, partnership with the highest profile, is fraught with problems and contradictions, ranging from non-disclosure of the full list of companies that are members to no mechanism for monitoring. Of the known members, many are global corporations that have violated principles of the Compact.

### **Undermining MEAs**

The lack of ratification and implementation by governments, especially those from developed countries, of key MEAs, is causing frustration and undermining sustainable development objectives embodied in those MEAs. Is this Type 2 outcome going to be spread to the Conventions and Protocol, too? If this happens, then there will be no incentive for governments to ratify existing international agreements relating to sustainable development. Within the context of the multilateral system, completing ratification would be of fundamental importance towards the goal of “translating political commitments into action.”

Similarly, is the same approach going to be applied with regard to other UN action programmes that resulted from UN Summits and Conferences?

### **Bias towards global partnership**

The bias towards “international partnerships” sidelines valuable practices and experiences at the national and local levels. Many of these have immense potential for replication and mainstreaming into policy that can be spread through bilateral, regional or global networking. There is considerable documentation, even in collaboration between some UN agencies and civil society. That compilation work by the CSD in cooperation with UN agencies, national governments and civil society remains to be done.

**PrepCom 3 should clarify these and other ambiguities and potential pitfalls of the Type 2 outcomes as currently conceived. Priority must be on galvanising political commitments and momentum so that Heads of States can finally take the bold steps for paradigm shifts and structural reforms at all levels.**