

AGENDA 21: THE EARTH SUMMIT STRATEGY TO SAVE OUR PLANET

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INTRODUCTION

Agenda 21 is a global action plan for sustainable development into the 21st century.

Sustainable development is a process that aims to meet the needs of the present generation without harming the ability of future generations to meet their needs. It is not only about particular environmental issues such as species extinction and pollution but also about economic progress which meets all our needs without leaving future generations with fewer resources than we enjoy. It can be seen as a way of living from nature's income rather than its capital account. Sustainable development is not easy to achieve; it often demands changes in lifestyle particularly if we continue to use up non-renewable natural resources, as we do at present, if we ignore the plight of the poor or if we continue to pollute and waste, then we can expect a decline in the quality of life.

For wealthy nations, achieving sustainable development means adopting and implementing policies concerning issues such as recycling, energy efficiency, conservation and rehabilitation of damaged landscapes. For the developing nations it means policies for equity, respect of the law, redistribution of wealth and wealth creation.

The concept of sustainable development came out of the United Nations Conference on Human Environment held in Stockholm, Sweden in 1972 and the report of the Brundtland Commission (1982) called *Our Common Future*. The conference was held to try and get all nations and industries to agree to act together to reduce pollution so that the cost would be equally shared. However, the developing countries wanted more development to reduce poverty and so were prepared to accept the environmental problems. Since 1972, it has become clear that what we do has an impact on the environment, from the change in atmosphere, the increase in deserts, the destruction of forests to the disappearance of species. It has also become clear that the gap between the poorer nations and the richer nations has become wider which can be measured in such terms as the average income per person and the number of people who live below the poverty line. While the poorer nations often receive little for their goods and have large and increasing debts they are frequently unable to tackle problems such as damage to the environment and a growing birthrate. The Brundtland

Commission tried to balance North/South responsibility and suggest ways forward.¹ This finally led to the world community holding the United Nations Convention on Education and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992 where the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Framework on Climate Change, the Rio Declaration and 38 of the 40 chapters of Agenda 21 were agreed.²

The United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was set up to review progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 and other UNCED documents. The Commission meets every year and more than 1,000 N.G.Os are accredited to participate in the Commission's work.³

THE AGENDA

Agenda 21 forms the basis for a "global partnership" to encourages cooperation among nations as they support a transition to sustaining life on earth. The central belief is that all countries can protect the environment while simultaneously experiencing growth.

The Agenda is a non-binding programme of action, which was adopted by more than 178 Governments at the 'Earth Summit' in 1992. Although the Agenda lacks the force of international law, the adoption of the texts carries with it a strong moral obligation to ensure implementation of the strategies.

The implementation of the Agenda is primarily the responsibility of governments, through national strategies, plans, policies and procedures. International and regional organizations are also called upon to contribute to this effort. The broadest public participation and the active involvement of non-governmental organizations and other groups are encouraged. Critical to the effective implementation of the objectives, policies and mechanisms agreed by the governments in all programme areas of Agenda 21 will be the commitment and genuine involvement of all institutions and social groups.⁴

¹ P S Bisen, *Ensuring environment protection with development - The way ahead*, available at http://www.policyproposalsforindia.com/article.php?article_id=135&languageid=1.

² Cutler Cleveland and Ida Kubiszewski, *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil*, ENCYCLOPEDIA OF EARTH, available at [http://www.eoearth.org/article/United_Nations_Conference_on_Environment_and_Development_\(UNCED\),_Rio_de_Janeiro,_Brazil#gen3](http://www.eoearth.org/article/United_Nations_Conference_on_Environment_and_Development_(UNCED),_Rio_de_Janeiro,_Brazil#gen3).

³ Anon, *Agenda 21: Programme of Action for Sustainable Development*, Botanic Gardens Conservation International available at <http://www.bgei.org/worldwide/article/0011/>.

⁴ Hassan Sadough Vanini, Hadi Veisi, et. al., *Appraisal of Attitudes Toward Sustainable Development*, ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES Vol.6, No.1, Autumn 2008, 131-140.

The Agenda comprises 40 chapters (arranged in 4 Sections), which address all levels of social organisation, from national and local governments through to development agencies, non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations, in every area in which human activity impacts upon the environment. Each chapter describes a programme area and comprises four parts: the basis for action, objectives, activities and means of implementation.⁵

Key chapters of Agenda 21 are:

Section I: Social and Economic Dimensions (chapters 2-8) concern:

- promoting sustainable development through trade;⁶
- combating poverty;⁷
- changing consumption patterns;⁸
- protecting and promoting human health.⁹

Section II: Conservation and Management of Resources for Development (chapters 9-22) concern:

- combating deforestation;¹⁰
- managing fragile ecosystems: combating desertification and drought;¹¹
- managing fragile ecosystems: sustainable mountain development;¹²
- promoting sustainable agriculture and rural development;¹³
- conservation of biological diversity;¹⁴
- environmentally sound management of biotechnology;¹⁵
- protection of the quality and supplies of freshwater resources;¹⁶
- environmentally sound management of solid wastes and sewage-related issues.¹⁷

⁵ Official Text of Agenda 21, DIVISION OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT - UN DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC & SOCIAL AFFAIRS, available at <http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/>.

⁶ Ibid, chapter 2.

⁷ Ibid, chapter 3.

⁸ Ibid, chapter 4.

⁹ Ibid, chapter 6.

¹⁰ Ibid, chapter 11.

¹¹ Ibid, chapter 12.

¹² Ibid, chapter 13.

¹³ Ibid, chapter 14.

¹⁴ Ibid, chapter 15.

¹⁵ Ibid, chapter 16.

¹⁶ Ibid, chapter 18.

Section III: Strengthening the Role of Major Groups (chapters 23-32). The groups include:

- women;¹⁸
- children and youth;¹⁹
- indigenous people;²⁰
- non- governmental organizations;²¹
- local authorities;²²
- business and industry;²³
- scientific and technological community.²⁴

Section IV: Means of Implementation (chapters 33-40) examines the basic resources necessary to push forward this global partnership for sustainable development. It includes:

- financial resources and mechanisms;²⁵
- transfer of environmentally sound technology;²⁶
- science for sustainable development;²⁷
- promoting education, public awareness and training.²⁸

The researcher will now discuss all the chapters of Agenda 21 very briefly and the chapter of Local Agenda 21 in detail.

a) Combating Poverty

Currently, more than 1.3 billion people in the developing world still struggle to survive on less than a dollar a day. In some regions, per capita incomes are actually declining,

¹⁷ Ibid, chapter 21.

¹⁸ Ibid, chapter 24.

¹⁹ Ibid, chapter 25.

²⁰ Ibid, chapter 26.

²¹ Ibid, chapter 27.

²² Ibid, chapter 28.

²³ Ibid, chapter 30.

²⁴ Ibid, chapter 31.

²⁵ Ibid, chapter 33.

²⁶ Ibid, chapter 34.

²⁷ Ibid, chapter 35.

²⁸ Ibid, chapter 36.

and crises in agricultural production and the environment promise to put people at greater risk in the years to come. In Sub-Saharan Africa, a child born today is more likely to be malnourished than to attend primary school, and the likelihood of dying before the age of five is the same as entering secondary school.²⁹ In the face of these challenges, **chapter 3** of Agenda 21 states that “the struggle against poverty is the shared responsibility of all nations” and calls for policies that promote “development, sustainable resource management and poverty eradication simultaneously.”

b) Linking Population with Sustainable Development

The relation between population and sustainable development remains a complex and highly debated issue.³⁰ Nevertheless, there is broad agreement that rapid increase in human population puts pressure on natural resources and the environment both directly, through increased need for employment and livelihood, and indirectly, through increased demand for goods and services. In many rural areas, growing populations demanding more food, employment, and livelihood have accelerated conversion of forests and other natural habitats to agriculture and other uses. Landless poor have streamed from rural areas into cities in search of employment, and the resulting rapid pace of urbanization imposes huge environmental challenges.³¹ While rural to urban migration eases the subsistence pressure for further encroachment on natural habitats, it increases the market pressure for food, timber, and energy. In addition, urbanization brings with it a whole set of pollution-related concerns stemming from sanitation, industry, energy, and transport.³² Recognizing the linkages between demographics and sustainability, **chapter 5** of Agenda 21 calls for increased analysis of demographic trends as well as broader dissemination of information on what these may portend.

c) Protecting and Promoting Human Health

²⁹ *Population Implosion, Graying of the Population and Negative Population Growth*, available at <http://www.overpopulation.org/older.html>.

³⁰ John Robinson, *Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development*, 48(4) ECOLOGICAL ECONOMICS 369.

³¹ Anders Ekbohm and Jan Bojö, *Poverty and Environment: Evidence of Links and Integration into the Country Assistance Strategy Process*, The World Bank Discussion Paper No. 4 (January 1999).

³² *Urban Growth Patterns*, WORLD ENVIRONMENTAL LIBRARY, available at <http://www.greenstone.org/greenstone3/nzdl>.

The state of human health is closely linked to development. Impaired health lowers human productivity.³³ At the same time, disease is often associated with poverty, manifested as illnesses caused by inadequate sanitation, malnutrition, or the lack of medical treatment. The poor take the brunt of the health impacts of air and water pollution, because they are the least able to reduce their exposure. They are also more vulnerable, because they are less healthy and less nourished.³⁴ In order to improve human health, **chapter 6** of Agenda 21 calls for, among other goals, improvements in primary health care, particularly in rural areas; better control of communicable disease; protection of the most vulnerable; and reduction of the health risks from pollution.

d) Promoting Sustainable Development of Human Settlements

Urban consumption patterns in industrialized countries severely stress the global ecosystem, while human settlement conditions in the developing world remain very poor, in part because of low levels of investment. People without income often lack shelter, even in the wealthiest societies.³⁵ To improve the state of human settlements, **chapter 7** of Agenda 21 calls for a series of reforms and reallocation of resources. These include providing adequate shelter for all, improving management of human settlements, providing integrated environmental infrastructure, supporting sustainable energy and transport systems, and planning more effectively in disaster-prone areas.

e) Protecting the Atmosphere

Atmospheric pollution is an enormous and growing concern throughout much of the world, causing widespread health problems, particularly for the young and the elderly. Atmospheric pollution has caused ozone depletion and threatens to bring about climate change with widespread repercussions.³⁶ To reduce pollution and protect the atmosphere, **chapter 9** of Agenda 21 calls for greater investment in scientific research, the promotion of

³³ LINDA T. KOHN, et. al., *TO ERR IS HUMAN: BUILDING A SAFER HEALTH SYSTEM* 25 (National Academies Press, 2000).

³⁴ Mahmood Bhutta, et. al., *Improving health for the world's poor: what can health professionals do?*, BMA INTERNATIONAL DEPARTMENT, available at <http://www.idcsig.org/BMA%20Report%20-%20Improving%20Health.pdf> (visited on 16th Sept. 2011)

³⁵ How to Feed the World in 2050, Food and Agriculture Organisation Working Papers, available at http://www.fao.org/fileadmin/templates/wsfs/docs/expert_paper/How_to_Feed_the_World_in_2050.pdf (visited on 16th Sept. 2011)

³⁶ David M. Driesen, *Sustainable Development and Air Quality: The Need to Replace Basic Technologies with Cleaner Alternatives*, 10 BUFFALO ENVIRONMENTAL LAW JOURNAL 25 (2002-03).

sustainable development, the prevention of ozone depletion, and agreements to handle transboundary pollution issues, among other measures.

f) Managing Land Sustainably

Proper planning and effective management of land resources is necessary to protect the environment and ensure our future ability to gain sustenance from our surroundings.³⁷ With this in mind, **chapter 10** of Agenda 21 calls for new approaches to conserving and protecting limited resources such as soil, fresh water, and vegetation. Signatories agreed to link social and economic development with environmental protection and, where possible, environmental enhancement. To achieve this goal, the chapter lists a number of management-related activities that nations and the development community should implement, recommendations in support of efforts to improve data and information systems, and a call for international and regional coordination and cooperation.

g) Combating Deforestation

Forests are immensely important to the world's ecology, affecting the climate both locally and globally, sequestering carbon, preserving rainwater, supporting biodiversity, and providing important renewable resources.³⁸ Poor policies throughout the world, however, have caused widespread damage to forests or led to deforestation.³⁹ In recognition of the need to reverse these trends, **chapter 11** of Agenda 21 calls on nations to strengthen the institutions in charge of conservation and management of forests and improve the level of knowledge and skills necessary to carry out these tasks.

h) Managing Fragile Ecosystems: Combating Desertification and Drought

Arid and semiarid lands are among the world's most inherently fragile ecosystems. Often, the same qualities that make these areas fragile also make them ecologically important, as their unique properties contribute to biodiversity in the regions themselves and to global biodiversity collectively.⁴⁰ As a result, human encroachment on these fragile ecosystems, especially unsustainable use, can cause disproportionate harm to the environment and,

³⁷ SVEN-OLOF RYDING, ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK 68 (IOS Press 1994).

³⁸ *Teacher's Guide on Climate Change & Energy*, WWF- India, available at http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/files/teacher_s_guide_on_climate_change__energy.pdf (visited on 19th Sept. 2011).

³⁹ Julian Evans and Jim B. Ball, *The Forests Handbook 27* (Vol. 1: An Overview of Forest Science, 2008)

⁴⁰ Alex de Sherbinin, *A Guide to Land-Use and Land-Cover Change*, available at http://sed.ac.ciesin.columbia.edu/tg/guide_frame.jsp?rd=lu (visited on 17th Sept. 2011).

ultimately, to people as well.⁴¹ To protect drylands ecosystems, **chapter 12** of Agenda 21 calls for improvements in the knowledge base, efforts to conserve soil and promote forestation, and programs to fight poverty and help drought-prone areas.

i) Linking Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development

As population continues to increase, most notably in developing countries, one of the great political and technological challenges facing the world is the need to increase food production sustainably.⁴² **Chapter 14** of Agenda 21 proposes a number of program areas aimed at meeting this challenge. It argues that the priority is to increase productivity of land and water already in use in order to avoid further encroachment on marginal land and natural, often forested, habitat. **Chapter 32** of Agenda 21 emphasizes the need to directly engage farmers and strengthen their roles.

j) Conserving Biological Diversity

The conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from its use, are fundamental to socioeconomic development and poverty alleviation. While biodiversity is being lost at an alarming rate, the welfare of the world's rural poor continues to be closely linked to biological resources, which often provide subsistence in the form of food, supplies, medicines, and shelter as well as employment and income from marketed biological products.⁴³ In addition, biodiversity loss may rob future generations of genetic varieties that could be very important in medicine or new technology.⁴⁴ **Chapter 15** of Agenda 21 calls for the entry into force of the International Convention on Biological Diversity, along with other measures to preserve genetic resources and promote sustainable development.

k) Integrating Science and Biotechnology in Sustainable Development

Science and technology must play a central role in the movement toward sustainable development. Scientific research will be crucial in increasing understanding about how

⁴¹ DON MELNICK, et. al., ENVIRONMENT AND HUMAN WELL-BEING: A PRACTICAL STRATEGY 41 (UN Millennium Project- Task Force on Environmental Sustainability, 2005).

⁴² Klaus M. Leisinger, *Food Security for a Growing World Population - 200 Years After Malthus, Still an Unsolved Problem*, 5(5) GAIA - ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES FOR SCIENCE AND SOCIETY 213-224 (September 1996).

⁴³ THE ECONOMICS OF ECOSYSTEMS & BIODIVERSITY: AN INTERIM REPORT, EUROPEAN COMMISSION, at 11, available at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/biodiversity/economics/pdf/teeb_report.pdf (visited on 15th Sept. 2011).

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, at 45.

human activity affects the environment, especially in such complex issues as climate change. New technologies hold the promise of resolving many current problems if they are properly applied and disseminated. Biotechnology, the science of changing the genetic code in plants, animals, and microbial systems to create useful products and technologies, is quickly emerging, with great potential but also with pitfalls. With proper management, however, biotechnology can make significant contributions to sustainable development in a variety of areas, including health, agriculture, and pollution reduction, and the clean-up of toxic chemicals.

Chapter 31 and 35 of Agenda 21 recognize the critical role of scientists, science and technology in the development process. These chapters emphasize that countries need to access, generate, and utilize knowledge to achieve sustainable development, and that dialogue among the scientific and technical communities and policymakers is essential. In recognition of the importance of biotechnology, **chapter 16** of Agenda 21 sets out program areas designed to establish enabling mechanisms for its development and use, especially within developing countries, and to foster internationally agreed principles on proper management of technology.

l) Protecting Oceans, Seas, and Coastal Areas

The world's oceans and seas are linked to many bodies of fresh water through coastal areas, and the two form an interdependent ecosystem that spawns much of the world's marine life.⁴⁵ **Chapter 17** of Agenda 21 sets forth a series of program areas aimed at protecting the marine environment, promoting sustainable use of marine living resources, and strengthening international cooperation.

m) Protecting the Quality and Supply of Freshwater Resources

Good quality freshwater is essential for life. Yet, in many regions, this resource is becoming more and more scarce, and in many cases, its quality has deteriorated.⁴⁶ To stave off worsening freshwater shortages and pollution, **chapter 18** of Agenda 21 proposes a number of program areas aimed at preserving drinking water, protecting aquatic ecosystems, ensuring that water is available for agricultural purpose, and increasing understanding of the effect of climate change on water resources.

⁴⁵ Hanling Wang, *Ecosystem Management and Its Application to Large Marine Ecosystems: Science, Law, and Politics*, 35 (1) *Ocean Development & International Law* 41-75, 41 (2004).

⁴⁶ C. P. Kumar, *Fresh Water Resources: A Perspective*, available at <http://www.angelfire.com/bc/nihhrrc/documents/fresh.html> (visited on 23rd Sept. 2011)

n) Managing Toxic Chemicals and Hazardous Wastes

Although use of chemicals and the production of potentially dangerous waste products are an inherent part of modern industry, with proper management and control they need not pose a threat to humankind and the environment. Nonetheless, the failure to exercise proper care in common worldwide, and the need for improved regimes in management of both toxic chemicals and hazardous waste is evident.⁴⁷ **Chapter 19 & 20** of Agenda 21 establish a number of program areas aimed at improving toxic and hazardous waste disposal and preventing their illegal transport, particularly, although not exclusively, from industrialized to developing countries.

o) Promoting Environmentally Sound Management of Solid Wastes and Sewage

Solid wastes and sewage represent major pollution problems in both the industrialized and developing worlds. Both forms of pollution seriously threaten water supplies, endangering aquatic life. Even when not life-threatening, these forms of pollution seriously diminish the quality of life. Because waste production and sewage are concentrated in urban areas, controlling and managing their impact on the environment will pose one of the major challenges for the twenty-first century as cities grow and expand.⁴⁸ **Chapter 21** of Agenda 21 calls for waste minimization, increased reuse and recycling, and environmentally sound waste disposal and treatment.

p) Taking Global Action for Women to Attain Sustainable and Equitable Development.

Gender relations and issues affecting women such as education, access to health care, and attitudes toward self-determination have significant consequences for sustainable development.⁴⁹ Women play a crucial role in determining overall levels of wealth in both industrialized and developing countries. In many countries, women work as farmers and thus are critical in the effort to increase agriculture productivity and reduce environmental damage.⁵⁰ Furthermore, family planning issues, which have primary importance to women, ultimately determine population dynamics, and these are key forces affecting sustainable

⁴⁷ COMBINE OR COMBUST! CO-OPERATING ON CHEMICALS AND HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES MANAGEMENT 33 (Asia-Europe Foundation, 2005).

⁴⁸ *Urban Environmental Governance*, UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL COMMISSION FOR ASIA AND THE PACIFIC, at 13, available at http://www.unescap.org/esd/environment/publications/Urban_Environment/UEG.pdf (visited on 14th Sept. 2011).

⁴⁹ Care White Paper on *Women's Empowerment*, at 2, available at http://www.care.org/newsroom/publications/whitepapers/woman_and_empowerment.pdf

⁵⁰ Ibid.

development.⁵¹ **Chapter 24** of Agenda 21 calls for fuller participation by women at all levels of society and in all forms of decision-making, particularly in areas affecting environment and development.

q) Investing in Children and Youth

Investing in the well-being and education of children and youth is central to efforts to achieve sustainable development. Countries that have failed to focus attention on educating all children have not prospered.⁵² In recognition of the pivotal importance of investing in young people, **chapter 25** of Agenda 21 calls for improved education and greater protection of children, especially girls.

r) Recognizing and Strengthening the Role of Indigenous Peoples

A major outcome of the Rio Summit was a growing recognition of the important role which the world's 300 million indigenous or tribal people play in the stewardship and sustainable management of large sections of the earth.⁵³ Although indigenous peoples comprise less than four percent of the world's population, they represent ninety-five percent of the world's cultural diversity and over fifty percent of the population living in areas of high biodiversity, such as tropical rainforests. Despite these realities, recognition of the significant role of indigenous peoples has been very limited.⁵⁴ Only very belatedly has modern science recognized the ecological and cultural sophistication of these peoples and argued for the need to conserve their knowledge of natural habitats, fragile ecosystems, and medicinal plants. In recognition of their importance, **chapter 26** of Agenda 21 calls for a number of measures of empower indigenous people, while promoting effective resource management and sustainable development.

s) Strengthening the Role of Nongovernmental Organization

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) bringing wide-ranging experience and valuable lessons to sustainable development efforts. In recognition of the importance of

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Leanda Barrington-Leach, *Investing in Youth: An Empowerment Strategy*, BUREAU OF EUROPEAN POLICY ADVISERS (April 2007), available at http://ia201119.eu.archive.org/dnb/20070701130120/http://www.ec.europa.eu/dgs/policy_advisers/publications/docs/Investing_in_Youth_25_April_fin.pdf

⁵³ Ron Weber, et. al., *Indigenous Peoples and Conservation Organizations*, WWF (February 2000) available at http://www.worldwildlife.org/what/communityaction/people/partnering_with/WWFBinaryitem6048.pdf (visited on 15th Sept. 2011).

⁵⁴ Ibid.

NGOs, **chapter 27** of Agenda 21 discusses way to establish partnerships and closer dialogue among NGOs, government, and international agencies involved in development

t) Emphasizing Local Authority Initiatives

Globally, emphasis is increasing on devolving service delivery to the local level to improve efficiency and respond more quickly to local demand. For sustainable development, proper integration of local authority in decision-making and service delivery is particularly important to build consensus and strengthen the knowledge base on how to promote wellbeing without exhausting crucial resources. However, this trend towards devolution appears to be proceeding in a fashion that is dictated more by political expediency and less by rational analysis of local needs and strengths.⁵⁵ **Chapter 28** of Agenda 21 lays down the principles governing the role in which local authorities should be participating to achieve sustainable development.

u) Strengthening the Roles of Workers and Their Trade Unions

Sustainable development is not possible with-out a productive labor force that is free to bargain for safe working conditions, fair wages, and benefits. Moreover, smoothly functioning labor markets which balance flexibility with protection from external shocks and downturns are necessary as nations adjust to constantly changing levels of development and new technology.⁵⁶ Recognizing the role that labor has played in addressing change and protecting workers, **chapter 29** of Agenda 21 calls for the active participation of labor, supported by increased training and capacity building, in promoting sustainable development.

v) Strengthening the Roles of Business and Industry

The private sector is a major driving force behind economic growth and poverty alleviation in much of the developing world. Moreover, there is strong reason to believe that private companies, if given the proper incentives, will be friendlier to the environment than state-owned monopolies, which they often replace.⁵⁷ To enhance the role of the private sector in sustainable development, **chapter 30** of Agenda 21 supports initiative to promote cleaner

⁵⁵ Guido Bertucci and Adriana Alberti, *Globalization and the Role of the State: Challenges and Perspectives*, available at <http://unpan1.un.org/intradoc/groups/public/documents/un/unpan006225.pdf> (visited on 15th Sept. 2011).

⁵⁶ GEORGE TSOOGAS, LABOR REGULATION IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY 17 (M.E. Sharpe, 2001).

⁵⁷ Matleena Kniivilä, *Industrial Development and Economic Growth: Implications for Poverty Reduction and Income Inequality* in INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR THE 21ST CENTURY at 295, available at http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/publications/industrial_development/3_1.pdf (visited on 23rd Oct. 2011).

production, more efficient resource use, waste minimization, and a healthier environment. It also encourages a more dynamic private sector, emphasizing entrepreneurship and small and medium-sized firms. Finally, it encourages the creation of venture capital funds for sustainable development projects and increased training in the environmental aspects of enterprise management.

w) Implementing Financial Resources and Mechanisms

The effort to promote sustainable development, most importantly in developing countries but in industrialized ones as well, cannot move forward without adequate resources. Investments in research, technology, infrastructure and social services are all necessary to change how people pursue economic wellbeing in environmentally sustainable ways. At the same time, issues such as the vast inequality between the wealthiest countries and the poorest, as well as the transboundary nature of threats to the environment, require effective international mechanisms to mediate among countries.⁵⁸ In recognition of these factors, **chapter 33** of Agenda 21 calls for the multinational agencies, including the World Bank (IBRD), the International Development Association (IDA), and the Global Environment Facility, to provide adequate resources to help realize the goals articulated in the rest of the document. Chapter 33 also calls for all partners in the development process to pursue financing alternatives, such as debt swaps and tradable permits.

x) Promoting Public Awareness, Education, and Capacity Building

To focus sufficient public attention on sustainable development, broad-based efforts to educate and inform people are needed in both developing and industrialized countries. **Chapter 36** of Agenda 21 emphasizes the importance of these efforts for those involved in development.

Effective development requires strong capacity on the part of beneficiary countries to manage new projects and integrate them in their economies. This is especially true for sustainable development, where a failure to maintain and upgrade technology or a breakdown in the incentive system necessary to capture externalities can have dire consequences.⁵⁹ **Chapter 37** of Agenda 21 emphasized the need to build domestic capacity from the national to the municipal level and in tandem with nongovernmental sector.

⁵⁸ **Financial Resources and Mechanisms**, available at <http://www.acca21.org.cn/chnwp5.html>

⁵⁹ *Supra* note 55.

y) **Implementing International Legal Instruments and Mechanisms**

By their nature, environmental problems often cross national borders. Effective solutions thus require an international response. In recognition of this, **chapter 39** of Agenda 21 calls for increasing technical assistance to developing countries in the field of environmental law as well as negotiating new instruments and mechanisms based on “both universal principles and the particular and differentiated needs and concerns of all countries.”

LOCAL AGENDA 21

The local Agenda 21 concept was formulated and launched by the international council for Local Environmental Initiatives in 1991 as a framework for local governments worldwide to implement the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED). International Council for local Environmental Initiatives, along with partner national and international local government associations and organizations, championed the Local Agenda 21 concept during 1991-1992 UNCED preparatory process.

Following UNCED, local governments, national and international local government organizations, and international and UN organizations began experimenting with implementing the Local Agenda 21 concept. Some local governments, often supported by national municipal associations, developed Local Agenda 21 planning approaches appropriate to their circumstances.

Local Agenda 21 can help to address many weaknesses or limitations in local development planning and environmental management – they have increased the willingness of citizens, community organizations and NGOs to ‘buy in’ to planning and environmental management where they are organized in such a way as to encourage and support their participation. They also have some potential to integrate global environmental concerns into local plans.

Local Agenda 21 represent a major innovation in local planning for sustainable development. They have a international identity and an international network, but are meant to be locally driven and implemented. At their best, Local Agenda 21:

- are grounded in a broad inclusive process of consultation, coordinated by a local authority and drawing in all key stakeholders;
- ensure that environmental concerns, from the very localized to the global, enter the mainstream of urban planning and management;

- provide an efficient and equitable means of identifying common goals, reconciling conflicting interests and creating interests and creating working partnerships between government agencies, private enterprises and civil society groups.

Experience with ten years of Local Agenda 21 indicates that local leadership and commitment are critical, but that the success of a Local Agenda 21 (LA 21) is also very context dependent. Their effectiveness depends on the accountability, transparency and capacity of local government, although they can also become a means for promoting these qualities. Thus, most examples of successful and influential LA21s come from cities where there have been major improvements in the quality of local government, only a few of which can be ascribed to the LA21 process itself. Similarly, the capacity and incentives for LA21s to integrate global environmental concerns into local plans depends on supportive national and international networks, although they can also help to strengthen such networks.

According to International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (2002), LA21 processes are expanding worldwide: 6416 local authorities in 113 countries have now either made a formal commitment to LA21 or are actively undertaking the process; and national campaigns are under way in 18 countries accounting for 2640 processes.

The most successful LA21s can provide a source of inspiration for strategic planning for sustainable development, not only at the local level, but also at the national and international levels, where the establishment of associations of local authorities can help to provide collective voice and influence. They have helped to create new and better ways of managing local environments, and engaged a wide range of stakeholders in the process. There is also much to learn from the less successful examples, which illustrate some of the key obstacles to local sustainable development planning – including the dangers of staying at the margins of urban planning (and initiating a few minor projects but steering well clear of the major policy issues) or of underestimating the resistance to new ways of doing things (and going through the motions, without really changing the standard operating procedures of local government).

Several assessments can be found at the website of International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives.⁶⁰ They show that one of the most important challenges for effectiveness has been harmonizing national and local regulations and standards. Unless local actions and regulations are supported by national policy and regulatory frameworks, they

⁶⁰ INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR LOCAL ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES at www.iclei.org.

cannot be effective. The establishment of a national association of local authorities can help to provide a collective voice and influence.

LA21 has actively encouraged city governments to share their experiences. This led LA21 practitioners to identify five key factors for success – which also accord with the principles and elements of strategies for sustainable development.

- Multi-sectoral engagement in the planning process, through a local stakeholder group which serves as the coordination and policy body for preparing a local sustainable development action plan.
- Consultation with community groups, NGOs, business, churches, government agencies, professional groups and unions, in order to create a shared vision and to identify proposals and priorities for action.
- Participatory assessment of local social, economic and environmental conditions and needs.
- Participatory target-setting through negotiations among key stakeholders to achieve the vision and goals set forth in the action plan.
- Monitoring and reporting procedures, including local indicators, to track progress and to allow participants to hold each other accountable to the action plan.

Lastly, every nation on Earth has an important role to play in the follow-up to the Earth Summit and the implementation of Agenda 21. National efforts should have been undertaken, but unfortunately, the signatories fulfill nothing that was stated in the provisions of the Agenda. It was aimed that in few years of the Agenda, the basic tenets of it will begin to influence decision-making at every level of society and deep understanding of the rationale behind the drive for sustainable global development will enable every person to contribute to the success of Agenda 21 programs. But nothing could come out because of non-implementation.