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Between 20 and 22 June 2012 global leaders will meet along with participants from governments, the private sector, NGOs and other groups in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for the UN Conference on Sustainable Development. The conference marks the 20th anniversary of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. This briefing outlines what has happened since 1992, and what the expectations are for this year’s meeting.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Sustainable development is seen by many as the guiding principle for long term development. It is defined as development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. It has three intersecting pillars – economy, society and the environment – and a strong focus on intergenerational timescales. The limits of finite resources and the environmental boundaries of the planet are respected. Sustainable development gained prominence at the UN Conference on Environment and Development – the Earth Summit - at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

Progress on sustainable development since the 1992 Earth Summit has been mixed. Most progress has been made in integrating economic and social decision making, but 20% of the world’s population still have no access to electricity, 2.6 billion people lack access to improved sanitation and 1.4 billion people continue to live in extreme poverty. Existing patterns of development, and a global population which now tops 7 billion continues to place an ever increasing burden on our planet’s environment. The Earth’s carrying capacity has been exceeded every year since the 1970s and global biodiversity has declined by 28% since then.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the UN Earth Summit, and the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development is being billed as an opportunity to renew political commitment to sustainable development and identify pathways that are safer, more equitable, cleaner and greener helping create a prosperous world for all. The conference is set to address two main themes: (a) a green economy in the context of sustainable development; and (b) institutional frameworks for sustainable development. A focussed political document, containing “SMART”\(^1\) measures to reduce poverty, promote jobs, clean energy and the sustainable and fair use of global resources, is expected to emerge from the conference.

Progress towards an international consensus has been slow. As of Thursday 14 June, only 28% of the negotiating text had been agreed. The pace of progress has frustrated many civil society organisations, who are calling on global leaders and governments to go beyond the status-quo and take bold actions to tackle poverty and regenerate the natural environment.

Progress is being hampered by a number of disagreements, including concerns that a transition to a green economy may limit growth and poverty eradication in developing countries; the form of and timescales for specific sustainable development goals; and differing viewpoints for future institutional frameworks for governance. Observers have noted that some proposals are being watered down, or suffer from being deleted altogether.

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Stewart Stevenson, is attending the conference, as part of the UK’s Delegation, headed by the UK’s Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg. Many global leaders, including the US President, Barack Obama, and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, are staying away. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, is not attending, nor is Scotland’s First Minister, Alex Salmond.

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\(^1\) Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic and Timely
BACKGROUND

Global leaders will meet along with participants from governments, the private sector, NGOs and other groups between 20 and 22 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil for the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). It is 20 years since the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, which is more commonly known as the Earth Summit. This year’s conference is seen by some as a last chance, an opportunity to renew political commitment to sustainable development and identify pathways to a safer, more equitable, cleaner, greener and more prosperous world for all.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Sustainable development is recognised as a guiding principle for long term development. It originally emerged as a concept at the Stockholm Conference on Human Development and the Environment in 1972. It was first defined by the Brundtland Commission in 1987 as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”, and is widely regarded as having three intersecting pillars – economy, society and the environment (figure 1). The term gained prominence at, and following, the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

These summits created awareness that economic and social development, and environmental protection need not be two separate agendas, and instead can be two faces of the same coin. The UN Secretary General (United Nations, 2010b) noted that sustainable development’s ultimate goal is the convergence of the three pillars - economic growth, social development and environmental protection - to achieve a future of universally shared human well-being and prosperity, within the limits of finite resources and environmental boundaries of the planet. Each of the three pillars does not represent competing goals that require trading-off, but are interconnected and interdependent, instead demanding a holistic approach in decision making (United Nations, 2012c).

Intergenerational equity, or the impact of today’s choices on tomorrow’s people is a key component of sustainable development. It requires, according to Ross (2012), the consideration of the long-term consequences of human activity on the components of the global system – economic, environment and society – in decision making, going beyond typical political and organisational timescales.

POLICY TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable development is an overarching long-term aim of the European Union. Article 3 of the Treaty of the European Union provides that the European Union works for the sustainable development of Europe. In the UK, the UK Government and its devolved administrations have an agreed framework for sustainable development (figure 2) which seeks to deliver “a strong, healthy and just society that exists within environmental limits” (Defra, 2012a). The framework identifies three enablers, or mechanisms by which sustainable development can be achieved, these are: sustainable economy, good governance and the responsible use of sound science. For policy to be sustainable it must respect all five principles, and recognise the
interdependencies and interactions between them. In Scotland the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires all public bodies to act in a way they consider most sustainable in relation to their obligations under the Act. Scottish Government (2011b) guidance on the Climate Change Public Bodies Duties urges public bodies to embed sustainability principles in all activities and decision-making, and to ensure those decisions are assessed for impacts on the economy, society and the environment. There are a range of tools available to help policy makers make sustainable decisions, including among others, Strategic Environmental Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and Business and Regulatory Impact Assessment.

In 2010, the current UK Government, and the devolved administrations, took the decision to cease funding the Sustainable Development Commission (SDC), their independent advisor on sustainable development. Since 2000, the SDC has provided independent advice to the UK Government and its devolved administrations, until it finally closed its doors at the end of March 2011. The SDC also had a watchdog function, scrutinising and reporting on Government performance on sustainable development. In Scotland, the SDC undertook an annual independent review of progress on sustainable development, setting out key recommendations for improvement. Its closure was described as “the worst possible result for sustainable development” by WWF Scotland (Holyrood, 2010).

Figures 1 (left) and 2 (right): Venn diagram showing the interactions of the three pillars – social development, economic development and environment protection – of sustainable development; and the UK’s Shared Principles for Sustainable Development (Defra, 2012a).

PURPOSE OF THE UN CONFERENCE ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Twenty years after the first Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the Rio+20 UNCSD is an opportunity “to move away from business-as-usual and to act to end poverty, address environmental destruction and build a bridge to the future”. The United Nations has set the following three objectives for the Rio+20 conference (United Nations, 2010c):

1. Secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development
2. Assess the progress to date and remaining gaps in implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development
3. Address new and emerging challenges.
Preparations for Rio+20 have highlighted seven priority issues for attention, including jobs, energy, sustainable cities, food security and sustainable agriculture, water, oceans and disaster readiness. The Conference is set to address these in the context of two main themes:

- a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication
- institutional framework for sustainable development.

The conference is expected to culminate in a focused political document, containing “SMART” measures to reduce poverty, promote jobs, clean energy and the sustainable and fair use of global resources.

OUTCOMES OF PREVIOUS EARTH SUMMITS

The Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The conference highlighted the burden excessive consumption in developed countries and poverty in the developing world was having on the Earth’s resources. It recognised the need to ensure that all economic decisions fully took into account their environmental impact. The Earth Summit was attended by 108 heads of State and more than 2,400 NGOs were represented. The Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, along with the Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Statement of Forest Principles were the main documents to emerge from the summit. The Rio Declaration on Environment and Development is intended to guide sustainable development. It set out 27 principles, which:

- recognise that sustainable development is human centric, and that development must be equitable and meet the needs of present and future generations
- emphasise the need for the full integration of environmental protection into the development process, including the protection and enhancement of ecosystem integrity. It highlights the role of environmental legislation and environmental impact assessments in achieving this
- highlight the need for global cooperation to eradicate poverty and focuses international action on the needs of the most vulnerable
- encourage States to reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production, and to cooperate to strengthen capacity-building for sustainable development through the exchange of knowledge and technologies
- promote reforms of the international economic system to drive economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, including the internalisation of environmental costs. It warns that trade policies for environmental measures should not be discriminatory or restrict international trade
- promotes the benefits of participative decision making and the need for transparency and access to information
- recognises the role of women in environmental management and development, and emphasises the need to mobilise the youth of the world to foster creativity and innovation to help ensure a better future for all

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2 Specific, Measureable, Attainable, Realistic, Timely
Agenda 21, a comprehensive plan of action to ‘rethink economic growth, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection’, was unveiled at the Summit. One hundred and seventy-eight governments voted in its favour. It sets out a plethora of wide ranging recommendations, addressing known problems as well as seeking to prepare for future challenges. It also emphasises the importance of engaging major groups representing the interests of civil society.

The UN General Assembly established the United Nation’s Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) in December 1992 to “ensure effective follow-up of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development”. The Commission is tasked with reviewing progress on the implementation of Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development. It meets annually in New York focussing on specific thematic and cross-sectoral issues. The Earth Summit and the principles set out in the Rio Declaration have influenced all subsequent UN conferences.

The principles and ambitions of the 1992 Earth Summit were revisited in 2002 at the United Nations’ World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. Recognising the role of civil society, more than 8,000 civil society participants attended the summit (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2002a). The primary output from the WSSD, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, was designed to guide development, and financial and investment decisions by governments, international organisations and other stakeholders, and reaffirmed implementation of Agenda 21 and commitments to many of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation sought to:

- establish a world solidarity fund to eradicate poverty and promote social and human development
- halve the proportion of people without access to basic sanitation by 2015
- develop a 10-year framework of programmes to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production
- diversify energy supply and substantially increase the use of renewable energy, establish domestic programmes for energy efficiency, and remove market distortions and phase out harmful subsidies
- use and produce chemicals in ways that do not adversely affect human health or the environment, and encourage the development of a global classification system
- improve and better regulate management of our natural resources, including water resources, oceans and fisheries, biodiversity, atmospheric pollution, and forests, to ensure that their use is sustainable over the long-term and halt downward trends in environmental quality

The Johannesburg Implementation Plan also included sustainable development objectives for various global regions, most notably small island developing states and Africa. It also promoted corporate responsibility and accountability, and sought to strengthen institutional frameworks for sustainable development.

The World Summit led to numerous pledges from developed countries, including significant investment in water, sanitation, energy, health, ecosystem management and agriculture projects and programmes, as well as agreements on research, and the transfer and deployment of greener and cleaner technologies. In addition, pledges to increase overseas development aid and to reduce trade tariffs and quotas were made (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2002).
PROGRESS SINCE 1992

Since the first Earth Summit in 1992 the global economy has grown by some 75 per cent, and the global population has reached 7 billion, and current patterns of development – in both developed and developing countries – continue to place an ever increasing burden on our planet’s environment (Defra, 2011b). WWF’s latest Living Planet Report (2012) shows a 28 per cent decline in global biodiversity since 1970 and according to the United Nations Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Global Sustainability (2012) two thirds of the services provided by nature to humankind are in decline. They go on to outline key global social and environmental trends that show:

- forest loss has slowed, but 13 million hectares per year were converted to other uses between 2000 and 2010
- global annual carbon dioxide emissions increased by 38% between 1990 and 2009
- oceans are becoming more acidic, threatening marine food chains and coral reefs
- the Convention on Biological Diversity’s target “to achieve by 2010 a significant reduction of the current rate of biodiversity loss” was missed
- 85% of all fish stocks are classed as overexploited, depleted, and recovering or fully exploited
- 1.4 billion people live in extreme poverty
- undernourishment affects 20 million
- 20 per cent of the world’s population lack electricity, and 2.7 billion are reliant on traditional wood burning stoves for cooking
- in 2008 2.6 billion people still lacked access to improved sanitation
- life expectancy is 11 years less than the global average in the least developed countries, despite global increases between 1990 and 2010
- growing income inequality between rich and poor countries, with the richest countries some 30 times richer than the poorest nations
- women remain more likely to hold a low-wage, work part time or be in seasonal employment than men, even though substantial improvements in rights, education, health and labour opportunities have been made

Since the 1970s our ecological footprint has exceeded the Earth’s carrying capacity, and continues to increase (WWF, 2012). Summing up progress to date on sustainable development ahead of the Rio+20 UNCSD the UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon noted (United Nations, 2010b):

“Many [of the] commitments have not been actualized in practice and there is evidence of fragmentation of policies and actions … The ‘interlocking crises’ of the Brundtland report (energy, development and the environment) are still with us, though in more advanced

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3 Ecological footprint compares the renewable resources people are consuming against the land area available to produce renewable resources and absorb CO2 emissions
forms, and a few more have been added: food security, climate change, the global
economic crises, and poverty and the Millennium Development Goals.”

In the same paper, Ban Ki-moon reflected on the range of international agreements that adhere
to the Rio Principles, adding:

“the practical importance of sustainable development thinking for development policy has
been diluted by the still common perception that, even if, in theory, limits are real, in
practice they are sufficiently remote in time and malleable as to be ignored in practice.”

For example, whilst it is widely recognised that economic growth needs to be decoupled from
environmental resource use, carbon emissions, fossil fuel consumption and primary metal
extraction have increased in line with economic growth (Jackson, 2009). This demonstrates the
lack of convergence between the three pillars of sustainable development, particularly between
the economic and social pillars and the environmental pillar (United Nations, 2010b).
Furthermore, drives to decouple economic activity from environmental degradation have shifted
resource-intensive production to other countries, merely transferring resource use and
environmental damage, rather than reducing it. Convergence between the economic and social
pillars has had more success, although this has been compromised by growing income
inequality.

Improving governance for sustainable development was a key outcome of the 1992 Earth
Summit which recommended the creation of national sustainable development strategies. As of
2009, 106 countries were implementing such a strategy, although in many cases this was not
the primary co-ordinating policy document (United Nations, 2010b), instead being subservient to
other policies, such as economic strategies. For example, the Scottish Government published
their strategy – Choosing Our Future - in 2005, but following a change in government
administration in 2007, it was replaced by their Economic Strategy, which has sustainability and
low carbon growth at its core (Scottish Government, 2012a). Volumes of environmental
legislation have been enacted, particularly in developed countries, over the last two decades,
helping reduce the visible and local environmental impacts of businesses and industry, although
these have failed to tackle the global and invisible environmental effects, such as greenhouse
gas emissions, biodiversity loss, municipal waste creation and finite resource extraction
(Jackson, 2009).

**EXPECTATIONS FOR RIO+20**

Ban Ki-moon the United Nations Secretary General sees the Rio+20 Summit as an opportunity to

“go back to the future … an opportunity to hit the reset button: to set a new course toward
a future that balances the economic, social and environmental dimensions of prosperity

He believes that Rio+20 should be about improving people’s daily lives and respecting the
bounds of our natural resources, and above all it should inspire new thinking and begin to
redefine the global economy.

In the ‘zero draft’ of the Outcome Document of Rio+20, the UNCSD (2012c) outlined their
aspirations, for:

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4 The ‘zero draft’ for the Outcome Document was prepared as the basis for discussion during Rio+20 Preparatory Committee meetings and for consultation with Member States
• a global transition to a green economy that would be people-centred, inclusive and based on the Rio Principles. They are clear that a green economy would not be a one size fits all economy bound by a rigid set out rules, instead governed by a flexible decision-making framework allowing each country to make appropriate choices.

• the development of national green economic strategies and sector specific roadmaps to guide business and industry, supported by an international green economy knowledge sharing platform.

• strengthening of the institutional framework for sustainable development, including environmental governance. Options include strengthening the roles of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and the UNEP, or the creation of a specialised UN Agency.

• a number of Sustainable Development Goals, with specific actions to address the identified key priority areas, including jobs, energy, sustainable cities, food security and sustainable agriculture, water, oceans and disaster readiness.

Preparatory Committee meetings have seen the draft outcome document swell to just under 200 pages, but progress has been slow. Delegates are known to be disappointed and frustrated at the lack of progress, and according to Rio+20 Secretary-General Sha Zukang the current negotiating text “is a far cry from the ‘focused political document’ called for by the General Assembly” (United Nations, 2012b). In order to improve the draft outcome document an additional five negotiating days were added, taking place in New York between 29 May and 2 June. However, as of Thursday 14 June, nearing the end of negotiations before the High Level Summit commences on the 20 June, only 28% of the negotiating text had been agreed (BBC, 2012b).

Leading civil society groups including, among others, Development Alternatives, Greenpeace, International Trade Union Confederation and Oxfam, have voiced their concern, stating that the (Oxfam, 2012) “UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) looks set to add almost nothing to global efforts to deliver sustainable development.” Antonia Hill of Oxfam added that “little or nothing has emerged that will deliver on what governments agreed was needed 20 years ago at the Earth Summit”. Civil society groups are calling on global leaders to do more, with Ashok Khosla, Chairman of Development Alternatives calling on negotiators to “look beyond outdated ideologies, and urgently commit their nations to the actions needed to eradicate poverty and regenerate the natural environment”.

GREEN ECONOMY

The UNCSD’s push towards a green economy has received a mixed response. In a press release the United Nations (2012b) stated that “many developing countries are more cautious asserting that each country should choose its own path to a sustainable future and that a green economy approach should not lead to green protectionism or limit growth and poverty eradication”. The European Commission (UNCSD, 2011b), like many other developed nations, fully supports a transition to a green economy believing that it “will speed up the implementation of existing sustainable development commitments and help to address the implementation gaps” whilst remaining committed to tackling inequalities and eradicating poverty through long-term sustainable growth and job creation. They are calling for a Green Economy Roadmap including specific goals, objectives and actions to be a major outcome of the conference. Many NGOs support a transition to the green economy, but remain concerned about the draft proposals stating that (Oxfam, 2012):
“the current financial crises, growing inequalities, broken food system, global climate change and shrinking natural resources require a new approach to economic development but the current negotiating text offers just more of the same.”

Some nations, including Canada, Japan and the United States, are seeking to have commitments to the phasing out of “market distorting and environmentally harmful” subsidies, such as for fossil fuels, agriculture and fisheries, weakened or dropped all together (EurActiv, 2012).

Furthermore, observers are concerned that some of the other main proposals outlined in the draft text are being watered down (EurActiv, 2012). For example, proposals on corporate sustainability reporting have been watered down, and at one point dropped, during the negotiations, leaving many including the Aviva led Corporate Sustainability Reporting Coalition of Institutional Investors, who are calling for a mandatory sustainability reporting for all listed and large private companies, concerned. They see this as a crucial step in opening up their trillion-dollar assets to green investments (Aviva, 2012). They argue that without a mandatory requirement, “it will be decades before sustainability reporting is common practice across global markets”.

To facilitate a transition to a green economy the European Commission is seeking to “promote the valuation of biodiversity and ecosystem services in the economy” including “integrating physical monetary natural capital values in accounting and reporting systems” aiming “to protect and enhance biodiversity and ecosystem services.” Whilst this approach is supported by a number of governments and corporations, opponents include the World Development Movement (2012) who argue that monetising natural resources would be a “false” green economy, that would expand financial markets, which put the corporate profits above the needs of people and the planet, and according to Hannah Griffiths of the World Development Movement (Guardian, 2012b), essentially lead to “further privatisation of essential elements of our planet to which we all share rights and responsibilities”. The World Development Movement (2012) cite the EU’s Emissions Trading Scheme as a failed attempt to influence corporate and government behaviours by putting a price on negative social and environmental impacts.

**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

The concept of Sustainable Development Goals has attracted significant attention after they were first proposed by the Governments of Colombia, Guatemala and Peru (UNCSD, 2011c) and were included in the original ‘zero draft’ of the Outcome Document of Rio+20. The proposing governments argue that they would “build upon Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg WSSD Plan of Implementation … catalyse means of implementation at the international level and … complement the Millennium Development Goals”. In their report, the United Nations Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Global Sustainability (2012) recommended that:

“governments should agree to develop a set of key universal sustainable development goals, covering all three dimensions of sustainable development as well as their interconnections. Such goals should galvanize individual and collective action and complement the Millennium Development Goals, whilst allowing for a post-2015 framework. An expert mechanism should be established by the Secretary-General to elaborate and refine goals before their adoption by United Nations Member States.”

According to a United Nations press release (2012b)

“Countries have differing views on what should or should not be included in the goals, as well as the formal process for how and when the goals may be defined, finalized and
agreed to. Some countries would like to see the goals approved in Rio, while others see Rio+20 as a starting point for deciding on the goals. Some have concerns that the goals could bind them to commitments they feel are unrealistic, while others want to ensure that countries are held accountable to achieve whatever goals are set.”

The European Commission (UNCSD, 2011b) supports the principle of having sustainable development goals, but are clear that they “do not represent legally binding engagement; rather they provide aspiration for the world to focus on and try to achieve progress in the area of the transition to an inclusive, green economy”. The Elders, a group of independent global leaders, is calling for “sustainable development goals that address economic, social and environmental dimensions of development in a comprehensive manner… to grow economies in a way that tackles poverty and inequality and protects our environment” (Guardian, 2012b). They believe such goals should learn from the success of the agreed global targets set out in the Millennium Development Goals that have helped galvanise support and drive collective action.

Some commentators, such as Ruth Davis, Chief Policy Advisor for Greenpeace UK, are disappointed with the draft goals, and concerned with the lack of ambition and urgency shown by governments, noting (BusinessGreen, 2012):

‘whilst this draft text covers the key issues, it also demonstrates a dismal lack of urgency in tackling them. Goals … are either open-ended or pushed back for years … to be more than an elite talking shop world leaders need to inject some ambition into the negotiation, right now. A vague commitment to act at some point in the future will no longer cut it …”

These concerns reflect the Danish presidency of the European Union warning that ambition amongst EU Member States to define measurable goals on the conference’s key issues has waned following “failure to deliver a binding deal to halt global warming” at the UNCCCF’s Copenhagen meeting in 2009 (EurActiv, 2012).

INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Current international institutional frameworks for sustainable development were widely criticised by the UN Secretary-General’s High-level Panel on Sustainability (2012). The panel noted that the UN Commission on Sustainable Development did not play a role in integrating the three pillars of sustainable development as originally intended, stating:

“The Commission developed a rigid, sectoral agenda, often focusing primarily on environmental aspects and thus neglecting broader economic and social aspects of sustainable development.”

The panel recommended the creation of a global sustainable development council. Its remit would be to improve the “integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development, address emerging issues and review sustainability progress”.

Most governments involved in preparatory discussions shared this view, noting that the (UNCSD, 2011a):

“current institutional framework for sustainable development was inadequate compared to the mounting challenges, lacked effective mechanisms for monitoring or ensuring the implementation of agreed commitments, had led to fragmentation rather than coherence and integration …”

In addition, they shared the view that sustainable development actions at the local and national levels should be governed at the corresponding level. Some government participants argued
that ‘top-down’ and ‘bottom-up’ approaches are needed to harmonise and integrate decisions taken in global, regional, national and local contexts.

Groups such as the World Future Council are calling on the governments to “mandate Ombudspersons for Future Generations … to help sustainability policy become common practice”. Such persons, they argue, would be responsible for taking a long-term strategic view, ensuring policies work effectively in practice and that short term interests are balanced against societies longer term needs. They would have a role to play in holding governments to account and facilitate the involvement of civil society and citizens in policymaking.

SCOTTISH PERSPECTIVES

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change, Stewart Stevenson, is going to Rio from 15-22 June. Mr Stevenson is part of the UK Delegation to the Summit, headed by the UK’s Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg. Alex Salmond, the Scottish First Minister, will not be attending the conference. Neither will the UK’s Prime Minister, David Cameron the US President, Barack Obama, and the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel (BBC, 2012), who instead are participating in the G20 Summit in Mexico, which is seeking ways to stabilize the global economy. The G20 Summit takes place in the days running up to the High Level Summit at the UNCSD.

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change intends to attend the Climate Group Clean Revolution Summit, the World Summit of States and Regions hosted by Governor Cabral of Rio State, as well as a number of meetings with other delegations from around the world and key stakeholder organisations. The Minister’s objectives whilst at the negotiations are to present a persuasive picture, based on Scotland’s experience, of the growth potential of industrialisation based on green economic principles and sustainability, highlighting as examples (Scottish Government, 2012b):

- “Scottish innovation in green energy technologies, such as onshore and offshore wind, wave and tidal, as well as carbon capture and storage and grid technologies
- our economic strategy, which places sustainability and low carbon growth at its centre
- the world-class expertise in water resources, waste management, and environmental and clean technologies that is available in Scotland, as well as our ambitious forestry programme
- Scotland’s commitment to climate justice, to help the world’s most vulnerable adapt to climate change”.

In the lead up to the summit Aileen McLeod MSP hosted a Scottish Parliamentary members’ business debate on the 30 May 2012 (Scottish Parliament, 2012) welcoming the Rio+20 conference. Ms McLeod called on Scotland to renew its focus on sustainable development, acknowledging its “key role in achieving economic stability, environmental sustainability and social equity.” She emphasised that “the Parliament has an important governance role to play in regularly reviewing and scrutinising the progress that is being made” on sustainable development.

Clare Baker MSP emphasised the importance of this “historic opportunity”, highlighting “pollution, climate change, ecological degradation and the … decline in global biodiversity” as issues that concern us all. Ms Baker made clear that we “cannot ignore the persistent concerns that progress is not fast enough”. She argued that there “must be further progress at home” and
echoed the First Minister’s earlier pledge to “set our own house in order, to be a part of the solution not the problem” (Scottish Parliament, 2012).

WWF Scotland (2012), in their Parliamentary Briefing for the aforementioned debate, called for the Scottish Government to show leadership on:

- making the transition to a resource efficient green economy, with low carbon activity given priority
- climate change, including strengthening implementation of the Scottish Government’s Report on Proposals ad Policies. They also urge the Scottish Government to take account of consumption emissions
- resource efficiency, including waste reduction and energy efficiency.

WWF Scotland also argue that the Scottish Government’s budget should be aligned with its climate change ambitions, and should measure ‘Scotland’s progress towards a green economy consistent with environmental limits’ and use a range of indicators of progress, rather than the ‘traditional focus on GDP alone’.

SNIFFER, along with Scottish Business in the Community, CIFAL Scotland, Scottish Wildlife Trust and Scottish Environment Link, in their report, ‘A Flourishing Scotland’ praised Scotland’s action on climate change and sustainable development, particularly the Parliament’s role in bringing these subjects ‘closer to the heart of decision making’. They called for ‘effective sustainable development governance … with clear goals and targets’ to encourage a ‘holistic vision that will inspire people and organisations to act together rather than compete on fragmented, single issues’. Behaviour change, biodiversity, green jobs and technologies, sustainable cities, and resilient communities were among the topics where, they believe, action needs to be taken.
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RELATED BRIEFINGS

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