

Factoring a poverty reduction agenda into the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)

A public debate hosted by SARPN

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Address by Mr Desighen Naidoo
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As a participant, rather than as the host country, South Africa is shaping its approach to the WSSD around the core objective of eradicating poverty and redressing global inequality. We have taken a lot of flak for that in the international arena, even from some close partners, because the original concept of WSSD was Rio plus Ten. It was about the next ten years of environment and development. Our argument is that we need to examine the last ten years, the Rio decade, and see whether we are giving the right emphasis to the opportunity that a world summit on sustainable development presents. Drawing on that analysis it is worth reflecting on various things that have happened in the last ten years.

In the last ten years we've witnessed the rise of one of the more powerful economic blocs in human history – the European Union. In the same period we saw the communist bloc re-invented. I'm sure there are varied interpretations of the current political paradigm, but the liberalisation of the Soviet bloc has unleashed, among other things, a new knowledge of poverty, that poverty wasn't only resident in the classical developing world scenario. It was a reality in parts of the world that were considered developed.

We also saw the rise of a new cycle of northern conservative governments and the demise and then the resurrection of the South East Asian tigers which brought to the fore really important debates around international capital.

On the poverty theme, probably the most important development was the Millennium Summit and along with it the declarations on poverty by various heads of state, including our own. In remarking on what makes the present different to any other time in history, President Mbeki said: 'Part of naked truth is that the second millennium has provided humanity with the capital, the technology and the human skills to end poverty and underdevelopment in the world.' This statement has found resonance in the international community because there's now a public acknowledgement of two factors. One is that poverty is not an issue of the developing world alone, it is a global problem, and the second is that, perhaps for the first time in human history, the collective means exist to address poverty in a sustainable way.

He also said some other interesting things that have shaped the way the South African

government is approaching the WSSD. He talked about the billions of people who are expecting a strong, unequivocal message from the Millennium Summit and he said: 'It must be that we have to jostle with various pagan gods at whose feet we prostrate ourselves, over all of whom tower the gods of inertia – the market and globalisation.'

Those words have helped to shape government's approach to the different platforms for the WSSD. About six months ago government decided that, while we need to support moving the environmental platform towards sustainable development, to guarantee sustainable development, we need to put more effort into developing the appropriate socio-economic platform to address poverty.

In response to this we have developed a South African non-paper through deliberations in government and with the various stakeholder sectors including civil society, business and labour. Based on this we have put up a list of 22 priority areas for international negotiations, front-loaded by six core areas that focus around basic needs and furthering sustainable development through efficiency and efficient use of resources.

Those six sectors are: Water, energy, food security, health, education and technology. In water, we are talking about specific targets for access to water for some 1.5 billion people worldwide that don't have access at present. We are talking about integrated water resources management and protocols around shared basins. We are talking about a sanitation target for the world. We recognise that the Millennium Declaration and the Bonn Declaration do not have sanitation targets, but it is quite meaningless to talk about sustainable development in the water field and the environmental field without one. We have put forward an ambitious target of halving the number of people who currently don't have access to hygienic sanitation by 2015.

In the area of energy the global discussion in the Committee for Sustainable Development (CSD) since Rio has focused on energy efficiency and renewable energy sources. South Africa has endorsed the Millennium Declaration target on energy, of halving the number of people who currently don't have access – some 1 billion people worldwide – but has injected a focus on access to energy and particularly modern energy services into the debate. But while we are getting to the modern energy services we must use the means that are available to ensure that people who do not have reasonable access to energy get that access.

The energy debate has become quite complicated because it is now in the realm of global energy access funds while NEPAD is also talking about regional energy access funds. The debate around electrification versus energy access has become a vibrant one. I think the way the debate is going lends itself to the poverty eradication outcome.

On food security and sustainable agriculture there are two things to recognise. One is that we need immediate action to reverse the current mal-distribution of food resources around the world that denies people access. The second is market access for agricultural products. But the core focus here is around doubling agricultural production, or whatever the factor is – for Africa it is a doubling – particularly in the areas of great need.

Health is the fourth issue and here addressing the problems around communicable diseases and HIV/Aids is a high priority. But we also need to address water-borne diseases. Much of the infant and child morbidity and mortality in the world today is related to diarrhoea and acute upper respiratory tract infections, which have a very direct link to water-borne diseases. So we need a holistic approach around the Health for All strategy that the WHO has started to talk

about.

The fifth area is education: here we are talking about expanding education in the classical sense. We are also talking about skills development and literacy as core movers of the programme. The Millennium Declaration target on education is vague and part of the challenge is to make it more concrete.

Technology is not considered a classical sector. Here South Africa is introducing a deviation from the international discussion on technology transfer that has gone on over the last ten years. We are still talking about technology transfer as part of an overall strategy but with technology partnerships in the forefront. We want to engineer ourselves into a position where we are partners in technology development and technology transfer and technology customisation and joint ventures. We are doing this because the developing world has become a wonderful museum of ill-suited technology inappropriately transferred from northern to southern countries.

These are the six core areas that we have front-loaded our priority list with. They are areas that talk very directly to the theme of poverty eradication. Needless to say each of them has a very strong sustainable development component and, through that, a strong environmental component.

The next area that we thought it would be really useful to work on is the challenge of having an equalised discussion around the pillars of sustainable development. Because, quite frankly, before the first of the PrepComs for WSSD the discussions around sustainable development were environmental discussions that acknowledged there was also an economic pillar and a social pillar.

There were two really important events that provided some impetus for equalising the economic pillar. One was the whole movement towards the Monterrey Finance for Development Conference, which sparked a lot of discussion. The other was the Doha round of World Trade Organisation talks. Although the Doha round proved to be reasonably successful, South Africa is still stinging a bit because our developing country partners still carry some of the scepticism that they expressed before Doha.

These two events put the economic platform on the forefront of the agenda and established that many of the solutions that we were looking for on sustainable development were around redressing the current global inequality on the economic front.

So we are pushing for such adventurous things as redressing debt, both through cancellation and debt relief. We are talking very openly on the market access issues and about fundamental things like the current attempts to transform the global financial architecture and arguing that a more radical approach is required.

All this means that WSSD, if it is going to be serious about dealing with the issues of poverty and lending itself to real sustainable development, has to do what Rio did not manage to do. Rio produced a remarkable formula for sustainable development in Agenda 21, the Rio principles are as sound as they can be, but we have not had ten years of implementation. Instead we have had ten years of discussions about why implementation did not happen: maybe one of the reasons is that Rio did in fact not have a sufficiently action-orientated outcome as part of its agenda of action.

Rio produced a wonderful intellectual argument and there was reason to believe that people would go away and develop national sustainable development strategies to ensure implementation. We want a better guarantee this time. We want a series of action programmes that set out a ten-year work plan in each of the priority areas. We want a political declaration that talks to the concept of a global deal, a deal for sustainable development. And that is not only between governments, but it is a deal between governments and the various other partners, with business, with civil society, with the development finance institutions and the international financial institutions.

We are engaged in a series of endeavours to ensure that some of this occurs. It is not an easy path – it is a fairly radical outcome. It raises the question of an international forum for sustainable development governance. At the moment it appears that we are pushing for a very centrist approach and perhaps maybe we are. But one of the reasons is that we want to guarantee centralised coordination of action at least in the initiation phase, before it works itself into working agendas at regional and national levels.

Mobilising around a global deal is not easy. The current situation is close to ideal for northern countries. There are fairly conservative governments in those countries and the concept of a global deal between North and South is not particularly palatable. We are doing our best with various developing country partners to lure people into a debate on how the sustainable development programme should look. The way we understand it is that by discussing how to proceed on priority areas we inevitably reach decisions around a global deal without actually talking about the concept.

The other thing we are doing is providing a practical example. We are not only presenting a framework for a global plan of action around these priority areas, we are developing implementation plans through NEPAD, which is our regional model for sustainable development at a continental level. We can share that as well because we are also looking for partners around NEPAD. And the partnerships around NEPAD may describe the formulas and the ways of working for the partnerships in the global arena.

To sum up, our basic approach is to look for a deal that reflects, to some extent, the continental view we are engineering for Africa. A deal that also reflects some of what we are engineering around SADC and the thinking that sustainable development may not be one strategy, it may be a series of strategies like South Africa has. Because South Africa has a combination of its anti-poverty strategy, with the RDP, with the urban renewal programme, with the Integrated Sustainable Rural Development Strategy and so on.

All of this is pretty ambitious but there is a fair amount of international support and we are hoping to get very strong momentum from the fourth PrepCom in Bali, Indonesia, that we can carry to Johannesburg and produce outcomes that will beat a path towards addressing poverty globally in a sustainable way.

RESPONDENT

Mr Saliem Fakir,

**Director IUCN (World Conservation Union) South Africa Office,
and team leader for the Greening of the WSSD initiative.**

To see what can be taken forward at the summit we have to locate possible action plans or agreements on dealing with poverty on a global scale in the political economy that currently exists in the world. Since the Millennium Declaration there has been a lot of thinking and direction of finances towards dealing with global inequality and poverty. Everybody will claim that the solution is not easy, but the question that I think we have to ask is whether, from a political economy point of view, comprehensive change is possible without comprehensive structural change in the global or national economies. We have to recognise that the shift of resources from rich to poor people affects the interests of rich people and those with power and accept that this builds resistance.

A lot of the discussion about poverty and inequality has to look at the question of whether major structural change is possible and what the implications are. And how does one engage with the inequality of power that exists between different countries or constituencies in the global or national economy?

The Monterrey Conference on finance for development was successful in getting major players like the United States and the EU to commit to increased donor assistance. The Monterrey Consensus was however about much more than just aid. The document talks about some of the fundamental structural issues around trade and the global financial system. Because of the limited focus on these issues the conference was not entirely successful.

One of the reasons is the separation that takes place in inter-governmental discussions. For instance, powerful countries with a major stake in the global economy would not want to talk substantially about trade issues at the Monterrey meeting. I think we will see a similar kind of thing at the World Summit. I see this as part of a broader strategy, because there is a differentiation of power in different platforms and forums. The Monterrey Consensus was an attempt at a more comprehensive approach that looked not only at aid but also issues around trade, debt and so on. To some extent that was undone in the outcome.

If we want to address poverty we also need to engage with governance issues. Neo liberal economists emphasise deregulating the economy and opening markets. Economist and Nobel Laureate, Amartya Sen makes the fundamental point that in a lot of developing countries, it's not just about markets, it's about ensuring that economic planning meets the development objectives of a particular country or group of countries. This is not to say that free markets are not important but we need to look beyond them if we want to talk about broader economic development. Today most people accept that free markets do not mean no government intervention. Particularly in developing countries, deregulation alone has not resulted in the growth and development that free market proponents predicted. Intervention is necessary to stimulate certain aspects of the economy and this intervention also needs to be governed by rules.

Sen also emphasises the importance of improving human capability. This is based on the idea that development objectives cannot be met by macro level interventions alone, individual members of a nation have to be allowed greater freedom to explore their full potential and worth. And that comes with better governance, less corruption and better democratic systems. Individuals need to feel they have the opportunity to participate in economic activity; The economy must allow them access to resources to develop their own welfare and that of their family.

Human rights and the global economy are not only issues for national governments. There is a

lot of debate about the role of transnational or multinational corporations, which often have larger budgets than many developing countries. And they influence the policies, particular the economic policies of many of these countries.

To date there is no global governance system that sufficiently regulates the behaviour of corporations. There is talk of codes of conduct that enshrine environmental labour and other standards. But I think we need to recognise that in forums like Monterrey and the World Summit there is not enough discussion or debate about the role of major corporations and their impact on the global economy and on the ability of many countries to deal with some of the development issues they face.

A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE ON THE WORLD SUMMIT AND POVERTY

**Mr Sandile Ndawonde,
Director, Green Network, Pietermaritzburg**

From a community perspective there are many environmental problems that relate to poverty, including waste management, land use, flood control and water supply and sanitation. Communities need to be empowered through the WSSD. They are looking to the summit to provide examples and case histories of approaches that work as well as those that don't. Communities need better information and communication, technology transfer and support to build their capacity.

While waste management can contribute to sustainable development and poverty alleviation, there are concerns that the failure to address it through the WTO leaves the door open for trade in toxic waste. There are initiatives on land use and some Green Network affiliates are involved in the Department of Agriculture's Land Care Programme. However, they believe the programme should be reviewed because it focuses on food production and does not address areas like building soil fertility and preventing or minimising natural disasters like floods. There has also been talk of a sustainable livelihood programme but community organisations have not had information about this. They would like to know more about it.

Communities would like to see the WSSD leading to closer working relationships between government, communities and NGOs. A fundamental need is to improve decision making processes so that people on the ground whose activities have positive or negative impacts on the environment and on poverty become part of the decision making process. As part of the process government and all the other parties involved need to make sure that information reaches the people on the ground. Community based organisations need information on trends and what is happening in different sectors from government and researchers, they in turn need to know more about what is happening on the ground. CBOs need more capacity to get information to the people. There are CBOs and NGOs that are doing good work in communities to achieve sustainable development but they need training in environmental issues and in leadership and management skills.

All those involved need to learn from past experience. Networks like the Green Network play an important role here, helping people to avoid repeating mistakes. They help to identify needs so that programmes and projects can be initiated to meet those needs. CBOs will need funding to continue their work after the WSSD as they fill an important gap left by the lack of communication between government at local, district and national level. This is also something

that needs attention.

DISCUSSION

CHAIRPERSON: One thing that comes through all of the presentations is the importance of the process and the Summit. It seems though, that for things to change, people need to be mobilised and get involved. But I wonder, is it possible to get a global deal? What would drive that? It seems to me to be something very important.

Secondly, a cynic might say, that we've had a progressive government since 1994, we've had all these strategies. The RDP, the Integrated Rural Development Strategy, and so on, but despite all our best intentions and efforts, the global reality is that we are up against something that requires a rethink. Although one could say if we had not done all these things, where would we be now?

I also think that it is interesting listening to Sandile talking about some of the practical things that involve organisations on the ground as juxtaposed to what the technocrats are saying. Another issue that we seem to grapple with a lot at Nedlac is transforming multilateral institutions. But to what extent is the current institutional arrangement one that we will not be allowed to tamper with? And if that's the case, are we on the right track?

DISCUSSION

Will Bernard from SAFM. (personal capacity) The reason nobody did anything after Rio is that nobody understood Agenda 21. It is incredibly hard to understand. It is not in any known language and is so convoluted that it takes hours to get through a sentence. We are all talking about changing governments in the north and south. You cannot change other people. It has to come from within every individual. Until we all know that fundamental change can only start with an individual we might as well stop wasting our time and money. Why don't we cut out all these middlemen, take the poor and get them to build schools. It's not difficult.

Mosebjane Malatsi from Thari e ntsho: I am not sure that community based organisations on the ground have been involved in the world summit. The question here is, how far, if at all, are those people involved? Do they know about it? Do they understand it? What do they expect? Are they going to get anything out of it? Secondly, why are we in this country shying away from planning? The RDP was dropped like a hot potato as soon as it was commissioned. And then we went into a free market system, the GEAR system, to implement what was promised, none of which has come through. We are not planning with a very clear commitment to addressing the basic needs with involvement, in other words, the bottom-up approach. Community development is not heard, let alone understood. At least, that's my impression here in this country. Why have we waited this long?

Michael Sacks from the ANC. (personal capacity)

Desighen mentioned a tendency towards centralisation when dealing with issues of global governance. And Saliem spoke about a strategy to try and fragment discussions. Surely the progressive agenda in this era of globalisation should be striving towards some democratically constituted global government and the UN, for all its flaws and problems, is the place that should be strengthened. We should be moving towards subordinating organisations like the WTO and the IMF, to the United Nations, and maybe the FFD was beginning to move in that direction.

Second, I think the RDP is still the foundation of our vision. We have just introduced the Integrated Development Plan processes at local government level, you've got RDP at a regional level, you've got NEPAD, and now we're trying to craft an integrated Development plan for the globe through this global deal.

Doesn't this contradict with the whole WSSD process, which says that you must have a National Council for Sustainable Development and a national strategy for sustainable development? Don't we already have instruments in place that we are using and that are not tied to particular strategy?

Tuthula Balfour from National Department of Health (personal capacity)

We are all probably converts and we see the magnitude of the problem. I wanted to find out from Desighen if there is some measure of hope that this WSSD will actually make a difference?

I'm saying that because the climate now is far more hostile than in the early 1990s where you had a more social agenda. Now the world is very dog-eat-dog and free market and not pro poor at all. At a political level is there any indication that this conference can come up with something? And then is there something specific, or a few specific things, that the government is working towards to make sure that there is an output that has made a difference for South Africans in this year?

Jonathan Katzenellenbogen (Business Day)

We are pushing for the Summit to be about poverty eradication and one of the speakers referred to South Africa's anti-poverty strategy. I have been following the budget and I know that there is no real formal, comprehensive thing called an anti-poverty strategy. There are a number of programmes, mostly dogged by problems. One cause of those problems is that the programmes cut across government departments and therefore there are tremendous problems in spending those funds. So what is government's thinking on its anti-poverty strategy, particularly ahead of the Summit? South Africa is the host and 1994 unemployment has increased and we have no poverty strategy. I think that's a source of national embarrassment, myself.

Ralph Harman from the Universities of East Anglia and the Witwatersrand

South Africa's global deal suggestion is pretty much in the middle between the right and left. On the right side you mentioned the resistance of conservative governments to something like the global deal. What is the real leverage South Africa and the G77 have to convince northern governments to make concessions? Is it enlightened self-interest or is there some kind of pressure you can exert?

The other side is partly what Sandile was talking about. For the global deal the main unit of analysis is the nation state, which may not even be the real locus of power these days. The second unit of analysis would be the trans national corporations or the IMF and the World Bank and so on. But what about local communities who are in many ways worse for wear from things like GEAR, and some people would even say things like NEPAD. Is there something in the global deal that will give local communities access to resources and guaranteed rights, rather than just promises access to international markets?

Janine Gonzales, Trade and Industry Policy Secretariat (TIPS)

There has been a lot of talk in the World Economic Forum recently about poverty alleviation. And for the first time in the North-South debate the north is realising that poverty is not just a

south problem, it's a north problem, too. That is a good platform for the summit to start from. But we must always be aware that this is a world summit, it's not a South African summit. As such, although it is a good platform for us to launch our important issues, the only way we will be able to change North-South relations is if we find common South-South issues.

John Clark, social work consultant

We were told that the summit could be called the Johannesburg Summit on Sustainable Development or the World Summit but not the Earth Summit. This was to show that it is not just about the conservation and environmental concerns of the North. I can understand this but it still raises a conundrum. Unless people have food in their stomachs and have their poverty and survival needs addressed they won't hear about issues like earth justice, and sustainability, and biodiversity, and climate change. But if they don't hear about these issues there will be more and more people struggling to find less and less food to put in their stomachs. For me that is the deep learning question and I'm really hoping that there will be some enlightenment to help steer our way through that conundrum and address both sides and hold it in a sort of dialectical tension.

PANELLISTS' RESPONSES

Desighen Naidoo

I think there is a lot of validity in everything everybody has said. We need to enrich the debate to achieve a better product. One problem is where to address this debate. You actually have to go through the global arena, through those dungeon negotiations in the United Nations system using those convoluted terms because they serve a purpose. And then you have to find ways to make it meaningful to people on the ground.

Naming the summit was a United Nations decision together with many players including South Africa and was primarily around branding, because the Rio Earth Summit was extraordinarily well branded. We did not want this summit to be Chapter 2 of Environment and Development. We wanted it to be the world addressing sustainable development and sustainable development is not only environment and development, it's much broader than that.

We spent most of our time on the economic and social platforms because the environmental platform was taken care of. I think we can make a fairer assessment of whether the balance is right closer to the summit when we come out with a negotiated text.

What is different now, and why should people engage? One thing is that September 11th has made the United States recognise that its internal security is very dependent on external security. So the biggest economic power bloc is now prepared to engage in multilateral discussions on global initiatives. They're actually engaging in the discussions around, if not global governance systems, at least monitoring and evaluation systems. That is a big change.

A second fundamental change is recognition of the impact of current unsustainable consumption and production patterns in the north, particularly in the EU. That is forcing them out of an inward-looking world into an external-looking world and they're now very happy to engage with the developing world around production and consumption. So there are some significant factors that are different in the north and that makes it a bit easier for us to engage in this conversation.

South Africa has already derived important benefits from being a key participant, but perhaps most of all being host. For the first time in this country, and possibly in the world, there is a cabinet committee around sustainable development where you have the Ministers of

Environment, Water, Agriculture, Finance and Trade & Industry trying to work up a collective agenda mainly about the positions that we are taking forward to mobilise a global deal, but inevitably talking about how to restructure South Africa's policies so that we actually have a sustainable development governance regime in the country.

Saliem Fakir

It is not so much about whether we can change people but how we can resist people trying to change us. If you resist other people trying to change you, they do change, too.

On the question about the convoluted language used at summits and conferences: I think that may be a problem for the way particular countries involve their own national constituencies and also ensuring that their concerns are addressed. Our Constitution is quite difficult but involved a massive process of distillation with over a million people participating and nobody can say that the Constitution is not an important document in our country.

We must take responsibility for making sure that they speak a language that we can understand. Journalists have a particular responsibility in making sure that whatever is being discussed is translated into accessible language. We must engage these processes and argue the importance of different constituencies participating in these discussions. Democracy survives through active engagement of all constituencies, and it is a constant battle.

If you don't engage there is a great chance that decisions will be taken that are not in your interests, no matter what the language is. And I think this language issue needs to be fought. It is not just about the World Summit, it is even here, nationally. The issue of language and understanding is a fundamental debate about participating in these political processes. And the more you ignore it, the more you give avenue for the technicians and the political elite to manage processes on your behalf in a way that may not always work in your interest.

Sandile Ndawonde

How does the grassroots know about the WSSD? Last year we discussed the summit at a conference for CBOs at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg, which the MEC of Agriculture and Environment attended. We will be part of the NGO process and after the summit, in October, we will have a conference to report back to our constituency on the recommendations made by our government and other governments.

We have a serious concern with the Integrated Development Plans because they do not have an environmental component. They don't deal with waste or with sustainable land use. Instead they continue to promote inappropriate development and land use driven by market value and government planning without community involvement.

At the moment we are predicting huge flood damage because of the way the low income housing has been built and we are trying to access funding to do the environmental impact in terms of flooding around the area and see where we are going with that tragedy in Pietermaritzburg.

I am seriously concerned about the concern raised that there is no anti-poverty budget. What is happening in this country if there's no budget for poverty alleviation?

What I would like to advocate is that CBOs convene their own conference and tackle these issues. Then inform the municipal or district councils and say: "This is our plan. If you don't do

that we will block the streets.” We know that Sangoco has called for action, we don't know whether this is still going to happen but we are still going to push the same line as it has been agreed at grassroots.

CHAIRPERSON: I was tempted to give you more time because you started to talk about what the lever was by blocking the streets. That might be the way to engage at national level. But I think the panel have not touched on two interesting things. The one was around what is the lever? The lever to get the global deal. It's fine to talk about all these nice things that you want to achieve, but you never get a deal unless you have the power to force somebody to do something.

On the enlightened self-interest thing – one of the interesting things about the US choosing to lead the world now is that it's choosing to do so militarily as well, which is not necessarily a good thing.

Michael Sachs also asked a question which I think was quite important about the centralisation versus the fragmentation of issues. But I'll allow a few more contributions from the floor first and then we'll come back to the panel for the last bite.

Ashwell Blassen, Bird Life, Zululand

Our Environmental Management Act (NEMA) is unenforceable, we can't even prescribe to industry how to behave, and this has become pretty public knowledge. We are trying to take a policy stance at WSSD when we still have to resolve internal issues. Recent environmental issues go beyond biodiversity to pure health aspects and if we can't enforce those issues, how are we going to compete with international specialist groups like the IUCN.

Chairperson

The unions have just brought this issue of Iscor and the poisoning of the water table to Nedlac. As you say, it's becoming much more serious.

A participant from Working for Water

My concern is the debate on poverty eradication because you go to the poor people and you raise hopes and you bring nothing in return. Most of the people who are grappling with poverty issues are women and they are just statistics. To what extent do we involve them in these strategies? There needs to be something to show on the ground, projects are not taking us anywhere. We need a strategy that will take people from project level to where they can sustain themselves.

CHAIRPERSON: The point you've raised relates to what Will was saying, that where we've had a successful case of something like working for water, why isn't it replicated into other avenues?

A representative from Cosatu

For workers if it is choice between working for a polluting industry or closing that industry and losing jobs we choose to work in that polluted environment. What strategies do we have concerning that? I also want to support the call to simplify the language. As an environmental person I have really grappled with some of the language and I am supposed to inform the leadership about sustainable development. What do I say?

Richard Humphries, SARP

What is happening within SADC about preparing for WSSD? Has it progressed since the Mauritius document, which I do think was a quite flimsy document? Is there something more

ambitious?

Patrick Malaga from Cease Fire (personal capacity)

I want to ask the person from the Department of Environment and Tourism why government is busy buying more weapons rather than using those billions of Rand to alleviate poverty?

Secondly, the WSSD agenda says nothing about the demilitarisation process and how should we address that, because it also affects people's across the whole continent of Africa, even abroad.

Thank you.

Final responses from panellists

Desighen Naidoo

We have been grappling with the question of the levers for some time, both as the government team working on this as well as our broader stakeholder team. And to be honest, they're not surfacing easily and I think we can talk about that a bit.

The quick response to the NEMA question is that we recognise its weakness and we are preparing four Bills, on Bio-diversity, Coastal Management, Air Pollution and Waste. That suite of tools will give us the legislative authority to deal with issues succinctly. They're a little bit radical.

On the issue of job creation and empowerment, firstly just to point out that Jacqueline represents how South Africa has been able to engage different sectors in the process. Cosatu managed to get some of the more interesting clauses into the overall Africa document around the corporate responsibility issues. A lot of people find it quite surprising that this kind of relationship exists in our delegation. So the opportunities are there. How we roll it out is going to determine the nature of the implementation.

Getting the women's issue into WSSD text has probably been the single hardest thing to do inside the United Nations system. The opposition even within our negotiating block, the G77 has been extraordinarily powerful and we have relied on other blocks, like the EU to bring it into the text.

SADC preparations in the early phases have been fairly flimsy. The Mauritius exercise was a capacity building exercise more than around preparation. But that's been consolidated both with the Africa process, when the five regions came together and now more recently because we have a continuous engagement both at SADC level and Africa level in between all of the PrepComs. In fact we have an Africa seminar that South Africa's hosting in early May to bolster the process. And it appears to be coming together. And the thing that's bringing us together more than anything else is in fact NEPAD.

On the issue of a demilitarisation, the demilitarisation discussion has come into the clauses around peace, stability and security. It's fuzzy because there's resistance from many about being definitive. It's not an easy process but the demilitarisation debate has been ongoing since the beginning of the PrepComs.

I'm afraid I have no enlightening comments on this country's arms deal.

Saliem Fakir

I want to address the issue of a lever and how one gets a deal? Partly this requires an

understanding of how decisions are made in the UN system. Each country has an equal vote so decisions are made by consensus, but in reality countries have economic ties and aid relationships with more powerful countries. Some of them have lots of guns.

Although you have consensus based decision-making and a one-vote system, you have blocs of countries that try to make decisions, like the G77, which is most of the developing countries and China, trying to reach consensus on issues to drive within the UN system. Part of the strategy is to try to get maximum consensus within the different blocs and then to engage the other blocs so that any outcome that is decided on will also influence the flow of resources.

If South Africa tables a programme on energy and water, as part of a global deal, it would have to work within, first, SADC, then the Africa bloc, and then the G77 and try to get consensus within that. The louder and more consolidated the voice within the G77, the more likely it is to influence the agenda. Because all the conventions have to have an outcome, there is a lot of playing around with words and the way different blocs take particular positions. Fundamentally, I think at the summit we will see a more minimalist kind of approach to trying to extract consensus and the flow of resources.

The programme of action is very important because if we can secure a programme on water and sanitation that meets the millennium development goals, we can tap into resources to support our national programmes.

Many developing countries like Mozambique, run up to 80 per cent of their government on foreign revenue. So you can imagine the importance of donor assistance for them in achieving their national goals. For this reason the debate and the levers are very much around how one plays politics within those constituencies, and how one uses the block system to try to extract decisions and direct the flow of resources, which national countries can tap into.

Sandile Ndawonde

Two issues. One is polluting industry. We don't say polluting industry must be closed down because it's polluting rivers or the air we breathe. But we know that the technocrats are looking very seriously into cleaner technology that will minimise pollution. Cosatu must understand that we, as well as the workers, are dying. Self-regulation is not going to work because we have seen in the past how industries kill people. We saw what happened with asbestos mining, what the people look like today.

Why compromise? Why don't we push together to put pressure on these big industries to invest and change the technology? Then we can all live a better life.

And then the question of language, well, it's a struggle, especially in the environmental sector because of all the bombastic words. So we're trying to work with academics and students to simplify these terms and then put the information on our website where people can access it.