

Rio De Janeiro Declaration

1. We, non-government organizations (NGOs) from the entire world, national and international networks and social movements, gathered in Rio de Janeiro at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) and at the Global Forum, assert our commitments to the future.
2. We have become aware of the contradictions of this unjust and unsustainable dominant model of civilization, which is built on the myth of unlimited growth and which ignores the Earth's finite limits.
3. We understand, therefore, that the salvation of the Planet and of its present and future peoples demands the creation of a new civilization rooted in an ethic that establishes a basis for limits, prudence, care and respect for diversity, solidarity, justice and freedom. We emphatically stress the impossibility of attaining sustainable development unless our struggle is shared with that of societies' deprived and excluded sectors against poverty and the causes of impoverishment.
4. We strongly refuse to allow the concept of sustainable development to be simply turned into an economic notion, restricted to new technologies and subordinated to the latest market products. To allow this would be to perpetuate structural poverty and wealth that arise from the dominant model of civilization we have denounced.
5. To achieve sustainable societies, we affirm that the rich countries have the duty to slow, stabilize and even decrease their growth rates, so that other countries are able to exercise their right to seek and achieve dignified living conditions and civil rights for their peoples. The right of women to control their own lives must underlie any action involving population, environment and development.
6. Having demonstrated that the major responsibility for the planet's degradation and poverty lies with the majority of countries in the northern hemisphere, we also see that in the southern hemisphere governments, transnational corporations, international regulatory institutions, banks and the local elites themselves have united to reproduce the same bankrupt and unsustainable model, which is passively accepted by society.
7. We are aware that today's North-South relations, based on inequality, domination, exploitation and unequal confrontation, are no longer acceptable. This places before us the challenge of working together on the mechanisms that create injustice and degradation, uniting the social forces which aspire for change against those which defend the maintenance of the status quo.
8. The Earth Summit has frustrated the very hopes which it had raised for humanity. It has remained submissive to powerful dominant economic interests and to the prevailing logic of power. The UNCED process has shown that, notwithstanding the official rhetoric, a majority of governments were unable to hear the NGOs and, above all, to listen to the cries of the international civil society.
9. We must emphasize, however, that the Conference was not a total failure. Countries have displayed different positions: in many cases, citizens and public opinion have led governments to move forward. The process has also moved towards

greater awareness and cohesion among all those who struggle in their own continents against poverty and for true development.

10. For civil society, especially, the positive side is that, after the 1992 UNCED process, it will now be impossible for governments or international institutions to decide on our future without hearing our voices. On the basis of our new awareness and autonomy, we will fight for the democratization of states, international organizations and the United Nations (UN) itself. We will fight for the active participation of citizens in the various decision-making mechanisms and in control over their policies.

11. We denounce the fact that the major transnational corporations have become a power above the nations, in collusion with international public organizations, presenting themselves as champions of sustainable development. It is urgent, lest our countries' sovereign rights be attacked and the UN lose all face, that democratic controls be established over these huge corporations and the so-called free market. Only when they offer practical evidence that they have given up on the myth of unlimited growth will we be able to believe in their current alleged interest in sustainable development.

12. When we look at our societies, we see how far we have to go. Those who benefit from economic growth are reluctant to give up their consumption patterns; those who aspire to one day achieving those patterns support development at any cost; meanwhile, many cannot even express their desires, bereft as they are of even minimal living conditions.

13. We have discovered that a sustainable society is being built out of and in the practice of groups, communities and peoples. Part of the challenge is to value the small experiences and solutions and at the same time to promote them regionally, country-wide and even around the world.

14. To counterbalance proposals currently underway for integration of Southern countries through market blocs, we propose the democratic alternative of integrating their peoples in the struggle for a common future of justice and democracy.

15. Our goal continues to be justice in each national society and between nations. In many cities and rural areas, populations have lost their right to a healthy environment. We definitely do not want environmental exclusion to be added to the social exclusion which we have already repudiated.

16. In a world rife with crises, in order to escape from the economic power that determines our desires and our future and from political powers that are far-off, threatening and divorced from our peoples, we are often tempted to close ourselves off into our own ethnic, cultural and religious traits. Our task is to turn this cultural, linguistic, ethnic, gender, institutional and political diversity into our very wealth.

17. Our greatest immediate challenge is to carry out and strengthen actions, dynamics and inter-relations that, based on our peoples' needs, progressively build common perspectives and projects. To this end, we must take a qualitative leap in leadership towards greater awareness, education, organization and inter-relation with national

and international civil societies. We have no right to await the 50th Anniversary of the UN to make this project reality. Rather, 1995 should offer us the chance to evaluate all we will have done over the next three years, and be a meeting point for new challenges.

18. To speak of environment and development is to speak of life as a whole. To try to address this whole over the past several days, we have broken out a number of separate issues: climate, biodiversity, forests, savannahs, deserts and semi-arid areas, fresh water and oceans, toxic and nuclear waste, energy, fisheries, human settlements, industrial working conditions, land reform, sustainable agriculture, new technologies, communication, poverty, urban and rural violence, racism, militarism, population issues, indigenous issues, children and adolescents, women, foreign debt, international trade, transnational corporations, General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, global decision-making mechanisms and environmental education.

19. We have been moved in our debates and in the drafting of our commitments by our sense of responsibility to those who are fighting like us for a better world, and to all oppressed and abandoned peoples. We assert our commitment to struggle "for them and with them". To struggle "for them and with them" equally includes defense of the environment and of nature which, like them, are used as disposable raw material. These are the commitments which we reaffirm at this starting point of the future, in this marvelous and wounded city of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.