

European Union

COMMITTEE OF THE REGIONS

Brussels, 22 May 2002

RESOLUTION

of the Committee of the Regions

of 16 May 2002

on

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

World Summit on Sustainable Development – Johannesburg, 2002

The Committee of the Regions

HAVING REGARD TO the Conclusions of the Presidency of the Gothenburg European Council of 15 and 16 June 2001;

HAVING REGARD TO the Decision of the European Council of 4 March 2002 on the approval, on behalf of the European Community, of the Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the joint fulfilment of commitments thereunder (COM(2001) 579);

HAVING REGARD TO the Communication from the Commission to the Council and European Parliament entitled Ten years after Rio: Preparing for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 (COM(2001) 53);

HAVING REGARD TO the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions of 14 November 2001 on the Commission Communication entitled Ten years after Rio: Preparing for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 (CdR 37/2001 fin);

HAVING REGARD TO the Commission's Communication to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions "Towards a global partnership for sustainable development" (COM(2002) 82);

HAVING REGARD TO the Communication from the Commission of 5 December 2001 to the European Parliament, the Council, the Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions: the Commission's work programme for 2002 (COM(2001) 620);

HAVING REGARD TO the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and

the Council on its annual policy strategy for 2003 (SEC(2002) 217/7);

HAVING REGARD TO the Communication from the Commission of 15 January 2002 to the Spring European Council in Barcelona on 15 and 16 March 2002, at which a new impetus is given to the strategy, adopted two years earlier at the Lisbon summit (COM(2002) 14), to make Europe the world's most dynamic, competitive and sustainable knowledge-based economy;

HAVING REGARD TO the Conclusions of the Presidency of the Barcelona European Council of 15 and 16 March 2002 in which the Council states that sustainable development requires world-wide solutions, integrating the economic, social and environmental dimensions in a balanced way;

HAVING REGARD TO the Opinion of the Committee of the Regions on the approval of the Kyoto Protocol, the implementation by the European Commission of the first phase of the European Climate Change Programme and the proposal for a Council Directive establishing a scheme for greenhouse gas emission allowance trading and amending Council Directive 96/61/EC (CdR 458/2001 fin);

WHEREAS ten years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 (UNCED), it must be concluded that in the twentyfirst century further development is needed of the international strategy for a balanced and coherent economic, social and ecological approach to sustainable development, otherwise known as Agenda 21;

WHEREAS Agenda 21 is a guideline for the development of internal action – a fifteen-year programme for certain policy areas with the aim of supporting interaction and cooperation between the United Nations system and other governmental as well as non-governmental sub-regional, regional and global institutions in the area of environment and development. Improvement is needed in global international management, with the initial emphasis on more cooperation between the various international organisations;

WHEREAS the important role which the regional and local authorities play in constructing, operating and maintaining economic, social and environmental infrastructure as well as planning, establishing and monitoring regional and local environmental policies and regulations, and assisting in implementing national policies was recognised in Agenda 21;

WHEREAS the draft text of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development will lead to an action plan which should include: balanced water management, an integrated agricultural and rural policy, the maintenance of biodiversity, measures for climate control and clean energy and transport management, a clear population policy. Local and regional authorities as well as civil society are important actors to involve in the implementation of this action plan;

WHEREAS 80% of Europe's population live in urban areas, and their needs and the needs of those living in rural areas who live on 80% of EU territory must be balanced together in a sustainable way;

WHEREAS strong links exist between poverty and environmental degradation. Many environmental problems are caused by lack of social equity and economic development and many environmental problems hinder poverty reduction and economic development;

WHEREAS more attention needs to be paid to the promotion of social inclusion, and the fight against poverty must be intensified;

WHEREAS important efforts are also needed in research and technological development in the framework of the EU's research policy, not only for the development of new technology but also on the development of decision-aiding tools as well as evaluation and monitoring methods;

at its 44th plenary session of 15 and 16 May 2002 (meeting of 16 May 2002), unanimously adopted the following resolution:

The Committee of the Regions

1. welcomes the political declarations by the European Councils in Gothenburg and Barcelona on a sustainable development strategy; urges the EU institutions to put these declarations into practice. Economic growth today must in no event jeopardise growth possibilities of future generations;
2. urges the European Commission to invite the Committee of the Regions and its local and regional representatives in the fifteen EU Member States to take an active part in the preparation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg which is to be held from 26 August to 4 September 2002. The CoR asks to be represented in the Johannesburg Conference, as it has an important role to play in the implementation of the decisions after Johannesburg;
3. expects the European Commission to always take into account the principle of subsidiarity. Moreover, rather than a linear top-down or bottom-up approach, the different spheres of government should interact in partnership, recognising their interdependencies;
4. requests that the European Commission ensures that all the major proposals put forward at the Johannesburg Conference are in line with the European Union's sustainable development strategy;
5. states that many of the targets set at the Rio Conference ten years ago have not been realised and asks the EU delegation to focus on reaching an agreement on the implementation of those targets and on taking measures against any country that does not respect the Rio targets;
6. requests that the strategy of implementation of objectives and guidelines derived from the international Agenda process should be based on the new approaches to policy-making developed by the European Commission and within the framework of existing EU competencies;
7. shares the internationally expressed wish for a global approach to problem-solving, the setting of environmental priorities for sustainable development, the combating of climate change, acidification and eutrophication, concern for sustainable transport (better coordination between road and rail and encouragement of rail transport), promoting the use of renewable energies, additional measures to combat public health risks and more responsible management of natural resources;
8. asks the European Commission to make proposals on how to improve the decision-making process in view of sustainable development. These proposals should promote the implementation of principles of good governance which must not be undermined by using instruments which were not foreseen in the EU Treaties;
9. states the need for the enlarged European Union to fully integrate sustainable development into all of its work from the outset, most importantly in the areas of economic, social and environmental policy. As the candidate countries will provide a rich source of biodiversity to the EU, particular attention should be paid to these regions and regions with more vulnerable environments;
10. advocates that a better coordination between environmental protection and policies for

poverty eradication should be promoted, bearing in mind that partnership at local and regional levels seems to be the most effective way of fighting exclusion and promoting an integrating approach towards sustainable development;

11. fully recognises the need to put into practice the right of access for all to global public goods and hence the role played by services of general interest and their contribution to people's quality of life and the sustainable, economic, social and environmental development of our society. Hence a necessary review of the situation should be done case-by-case, service by service, to find the most suitable solution between short- and long-term objectives, and between economic and social concerns;
12. agrees with the European Parliament that the Commission Communications make too little mention of the contribution of local and regional authorities to sustainable development.

The following thematic areas should be developed:

13. attention to be given to water policy in transnational spatial development strategies and in regional and local structural action plans drawn up in the near future. Extra attention should be paid to protection against flooding, both to reinforcing the sea and inland water protection structures;
14. activities encouraging the sustainable use of water and of the aquatic environment. The main aim is to ensure more sustainable use of water as an essential natural resource, and it is therefore crucial to promote technologies to collect, treat and distribute water while avoiding negative effects on the ecosystem. Management of water distribution must also ensure equal access for all to this resource. Furthermore policies should be developed to ensure the highest level of protection against pollution of sea and freshwater. Above all, ensuring safe drinking water and the existence of good sanitary services is the greatest priority for human health protection;
15. Member States of the European Union, which have not yet reached the United Nations target of 0.7% of GNP in Official Development Assistance (ODA), to substantially increase its share;
16. agriculture associated with a specific land area to be treated as an economic activity; without depleting the natural goodness of the soil or polluting the environment through over-fertilisation or use of non-biodegradable pesticides;
17. agriculture, respecting the principles of sustainable development, to also be supported and given suitable financial support as this would benefit the management of nature, preservation of biodiversity and the landscape (more particularly in fragile areas) as well as stimulating ecologically sustainable farming and ensuring social cohesion in rural areas. European agriculture should guarantee a high level of health and food safety. There is a need to respect the public requirements of traceability and labelling;
18. the recognition of the need to improve the quality of world food production, through a better regulatory framework (monitoring and penalties) for (bio)technology. There may be unknown risks connected with certain technologies and the related ethical issues (e.g. GMOs) may not have been sufficiently discussed;
19. the right balance to be struck between the targeted, large-scale promotion of certain (energy and transport) technologies and the use of generic innovation policy, putting sustainability

- focused technology to work through the market;
20. in all policy areas sufficient evaluation methods should be developed in order to identify actual progress in the various spheres of sustainable development on the basis of objective criteria. The Committee of the Regions feels that the criteria used should be specific, measurable, acceptable, realistic and focusing on a specific period;
 21. sustainable development should be included as a central theme of all new sectoral, regional and business plans financed through the EC budget. Those responsible for regional and local authorities should engage in dialogue with the business community and encourage sustainable investment;
 22. economic measures and environmental fiscal and tax policy are fundamentally important instruments, not just in relation to environmental issues, but also for regional development in order to promote a more rational use of resources and less harmful emissions, and to finance equal access to the public goods necessary for sustainable development;
 23. a balanced approach to be adopted in combining good social conditions with high productivity and high quality of goods and services. The underlying principle should be that more and better employment in a dynamic and competitive economy strengthens social cohesion;
 24. active citizen participation should be supported in social and environmental change; efforts in the field of education and public information campaigns are crucial. Education and training following a life-long learning approach should be seen as key instruments in developing a skilled workforce, a core element of sustainable economic and social development;
 25. more attention must be paid to shaping a sustainable living environment, including the sustainable use of forests, urban living areas and the working environment;
 26. the concept of local agenda 21, as introduced by the Rio Agenda, must be continued and strengthened. The good practice in thousands of European villages, towns and counties proves that this instrument helps municipalities to achieve a sustainable development which integrates the economy, social relations and the environment, and at the same time encourages dialogue with, and the active participation of, local citizens;
 27. the agenda 21 process, which is generally considered to be a process of dialogue within society, should be carefully monitored. It is necessary to develop a social learning and creative process as well as new ways of steering social co-existence and new instruments of cooperation, which point beyond the traditional and mostly bureaucratic and regulative governmental procedures.

The CoR instructs its President to forward this resolution to the European Commission, to the European Parliament, to the Council and to the Spanish and Danish Presidencies of the Union.

Brussels, 16 May 2002

The President

The Secretary-General

of the

of the

Committee of the Regions

Committee of the Regions

Albert Bore

Vincenzo Falcone

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