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## **UN launches global conversation on sustainable development**



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon (right) and Under-Secretary-General Sha Zukang at the launch of global conversation ahead of Rio+20

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The United Nations today launched a campaign ahead of its major conference on sustainable development (Rio+20) in June next year, inviting governments, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and people everywhere to engage in a global conversation about the communities they want to see in the future.

“Sustainable development is a top priority for a simple reason – it cuts across all the challenges and priorities,” [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon told a press briefing this morning. “We know that what we face – food insecurity, water scarcity, energy shortages, climate change, increasing carbon emissions and unhealthy oceans – all these are the priority challenges which we have to address.”

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The campaign – *Rio+20: The Future We Want* – aims to encourage people to envision how societies can build a future that promotes prosperity for everyone without degrading the planet’s natural environment, and to contribute their ideas through various mediums – photos, letters, essays and drawings – which will be combined to form an exhibit at the conference next year, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

“Opportunities like Rio+20 do not come along often,” Mr. Ban said. “The Rio+20 conference offers us a unique chance to discuss the challenges which we face and the solutions we can pursue.... It’s a chance to visualize and plan for the future we want.”

The conference, which will be attended by world leaders and environmental experts, seeks to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date, and address new emerging challenges.

“Rio+20 is our best chance to define pathways to a sustainable future,” said the conference’s Secretary-General, Sha Zukang.

“World leaders along with thousands of participants from the private sector, NGOs and other groups will come together to shape how we can reduce poverty, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection on an ever more crowded planet.”

Mr. Sha also said that focusing on building green economies is especially important now, as the world faces a global economic crisis.

“The green economy can help accelerate progress towards sustainable development and poverty eradication and re-orient public and private decision-making so that it reflects, and respects, natural capital.

“It can be a way to foster economic growth and environmental protection by promoting win-win solutions and it can be a way to include the poor as active participants, and the main beneficiaries.”

Kiyo Akasaka, Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, said one of the main objectives of the campaign is to familiarize the public with what sustainable development entails, and raise awareness of how it can transform communities.

“We need to do more to take sustainable development out of the realm of the abstract and make it real to people,” Mr. Akasaka said.

“We need to show, now more than ever, that it is possible to have development that generates prosperity for everyone and an improved quality of life while protecting our natural environment,” he said.

As part of the campaign, the UN is launching a website that will provide information about several key sustainable development issues, including cities, disaster resilience, energy, food, jobs, oceans and water. The website will also serve as an online platform through which the public can send ideas and comments and discuss issues on sustainable development.

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