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UN senior officials highlight Rio+20 achievements



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. UN Photo/Eskinder Debebe

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United Nations senior officials today highlighted the achievements made during the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ([Rio+20](#)) held last week in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, stressing that they represent a global movement of change in which governments, the private sector and civil society all contribute to achieve global prosperity while protecting the environment.

“Let me be clear. Rio+20 was a success,” [said Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon](#) at a General Assembly meeting on the outcome of the Conference. “In Rio, we saw the further evolution of an undeniable global movement for change.”

More than 40,000 people – including parliamentarians, mayors, UN officials, chief executive officers and civil society leaders – attended Rio+20 from 20-22 June. The event followed on from the Earth Summit in 1992, also held in Rio de Janeiro, during which countries adopted Agenda 21 – a blueprint to rethink economic growth, advance social equity and ensure environmental protection.

In his [remarks](#), Mr. Ban highlighted several parts of the Rio+20 outcome document, entitled ‘The Future We Want,’ which he hailed as “an important victory for multilateralism after months of difficult negotiations.”

Through the document, the UN chief said, countries renewed their political commitment to sustainable development, agreed to establish a set of sustainable development goals (SDGs), and established a high-level political forum on sustainable development.

The outcome document also calls for a wide range of actions, such as detailing how the green economy can be used as a tool to achieve sustainable development; strengthening the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)); promoting corporate sustainability reporting measures; taking steps to go beyond gross domestic product to assess the well-being of a country; developing a strategy for sustainable development financing; and, adopting a framework for tackling sustainable consumption and production.

It also focuses on improving gender equity; recognizing the importance of voluntary commitments on sustainable development; and stressing the need to engage civil society and incorporate science into policy; among other points.

Mr. Ban emphasized the importance of the more than 700 commitments registered during the Conference.

“This is a remarkable testament to bottom-up, grassroots commitment,” Mr. Ban said. “The world is watching and will hold us all accountable to the commitments made in Rio.”

[Speaking to reporters](#) after the meeting, Mr. Ban said that the many commitments made in Rio will be a “concrete and lasting legacy” of the Conference. “If the outcome document is the foundation for the next stage of our journey to sustainable development, the commitments are the bricks and cement,” he stated.

In his remarks to the gathering, the President of the General Assembly, Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, called on Member States to respect their commitments made in relation to Rio+20 “so that they can guide our future actions.”

“Implementation is imperative if we are to attain the future we want,” he added. “Now that the summit is over, the real work begins, and we all have our parts to play for ultimate success.”

Mr. Al-Nasser reiterated the Assembly's commitment to play a central role in helping define and establish the SDGs. He also announced a series of meetings in the area of sustainable development and global prosperity, to help tackle the issue related to the global financial crises, which are also linked to countries' capabilities to work towards sustainable development.

"No country has been completely immune from the global economic and financial crisis that hit the world in 2008. To tackle this issue successfully, the world needs to come together like never before and act collectively with a sense of urgency," he said.

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