



**EEAC supporting a major Rio-plus-20 event in 2012 on a sustainable
global society and economy
Recommendations taken by the EEAC 2009 Annual Plenary Session,
Dubrovnik, 24th October 2009**

2012 marks the 20th anniversary of the UN Rio Conference on Environment and Development. What became known as the “Earth Summit” produced a number of very important international agreements on climate change, biodiversity and desertification, as well as the overarching Agenda 21. Its success was largely due to an intensive and well managed preparatory process. Furthermore, 2012 also marks the 40th anniversary of the UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment and, thus, adds to the sense of continuity and creativity that accounts for the idea of sustainability.

Yet the promise of the various Rio outcomes has not materialised in a way that safeguards the life support processes and ecosystem functions of the planet, which ultimately control the habitability of the Earth for all future humanity. Nor has there been any overall lessening of social disparity, even though incomes and other conventional measures of economic growth have increased for some countries and citizens during this period.

This somewhat unsatisfactory situation tells us that the basic objectives of sustainable development have not been met, despite the follow up conference on the World Strategy on Sustainable Development, with its Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, held in Johannesburg in 2002.

In the light of the current difficulty facing all nations in trying to pursue conventional measures and objectives of economic growth, and the growing realisation that such pathways are further undermining both the life support of the planet as well as the social wellbeing of its citizens, it is appropriate to take stock and to consider better how to redirect the pathways of social, environmental, and economic betterment in ways of governing and managing that does justice to the original Rio vision.

The Brazilian government has proposed that some initiative to promote a Rio plus 20 momentum should take place in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. Broad support is building up. The UN General Assembly is soon to consider the suggestion. Whatever the scale of the event will be, it should comply with the ecological and social standards of a “green meeting”. What becomes a feature of big world sport events today applies for this event without any doubt. The actual character of this conference will depend on the preparation process. Regardless of the outcome, the dramatically changed world of 20 years later on, requires us to reassess the significance, role and delivery of sustainable development throughout the world. Such a discussion must include the integration of social, economic and environmental betterment as well as the means for achieving such a vision.

This opportunity is all the more timely as there is currently a valuable discussion within the EU of the appropriate role and context of the main policy strategies of the Union. These include the EU Sustainable Development Strategy, the Lisbon Strategy, the Budget procedures together with its various regional funds, the Social Chapter, competition and state aid, climate change and energy security, the European research area, as well as the scope for a sustainable spatial planning and rural land use future for the EU.

In the light of this felicitous opportunity, the EEAC, at its annual conference held in Dubrovnik on 22 -24th October 2009, recommended:

1. That the Swedish Presidency, and subsequent Presidencies, are encouraged to address the Rio plus 20 agenda as part of the international dimension of the EU's Sustainable Development Strategy.
2. That the EU supports the Brazilian proposal to hold a conference and stock take of the Rio experience and new ways of developing sustainable development beyond 2012.
3. That the EU initiates and carries out a serious and ambitious preparation process for this conference and provides the necessary funding for it. The arrangement should make good use of the existing UN CSD processes by strengthening and consolidating the CSD work flow. Following the successful model of various international preparation processes, a secretariat with appropriate working and convening power for the preparation for the Rio+20 event should be considered.
4. That a UN-mandated Peer Commission (similar to the "Brundtland II Commission", but not a replicate) should be established. Notwithstanding the full range of diplomatic processes along the usual UN channels, such a Commission would need a fast-track-approach to bring in the eminent views of Peers as how to rearrange the current institutional architecture to make sustainable development more effective in the light of the current and foreseeable economic conditions.
5. That independent assessment bodies are established for the necessary review of national and sub-national implementation of Agenda 21. Member states might consider mandating and empowering existing national and sub-national Sustainable Development and Environment Councils (as appropriate) for this task.
6. That all relevant discussion and debate take place in the context of prosperity with redirected patterns of growth, where social wellbeing and social fairness are given due consideration in the reassessment of the economy and environment, and that appropriate attention is given to innovative forms of governance and to local experimental and community led schemes, all set within a strong and focussed sustainable development framework, so that every opportunity is available to test out the suitable redirection of economy, society, and ecosystem resilience.
7. That the primary focus of the Rio+20 conference should be directed to seeking new pathways for attaining a sustainable global society and economy.

EEAC is committed to continuing its work with the EU governmental organisations and civil society organisations, such as in particular the EESC, in taking a lead in the design and outcomes of this preparatory assessment, bearing in mind the range of relevant activity already taking place.