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Umwelt, Verkehr, Energie und Kommunikation UVEK

**Bundesamt für Umwelt BAFU**  
Abteilung Internationales

# **Rio+20: Challenges, Opportunities, Responses**

## **A Swiss perspective**

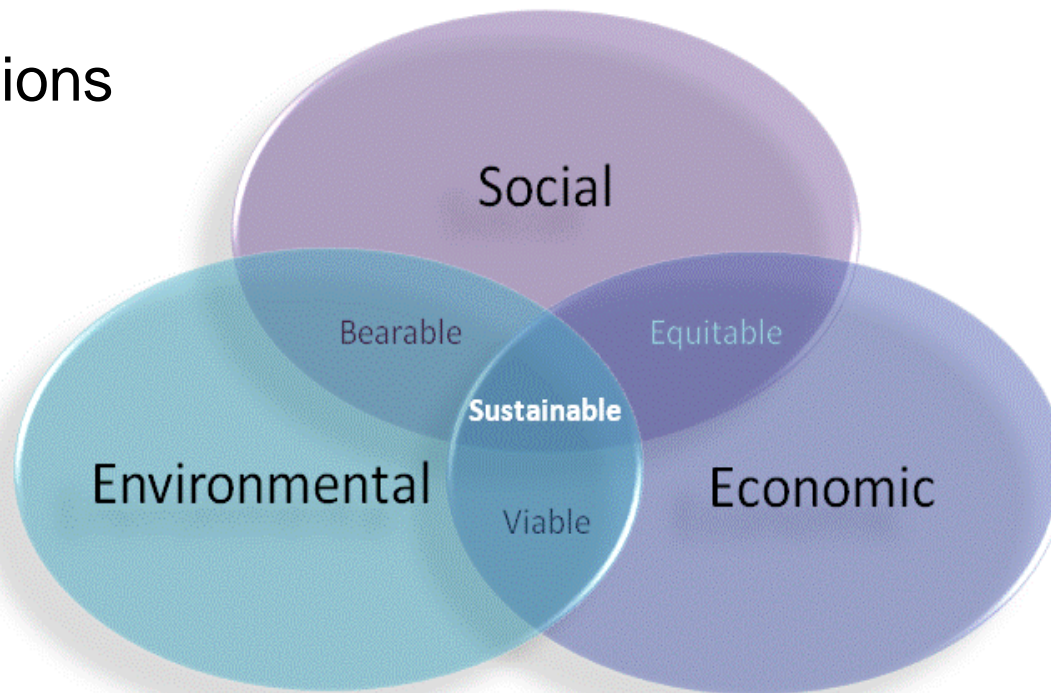
10th May 2012, University of Geneva

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International Affairs Division, Federal Office for the Environment



# Definitions

- Brundtland Commission (1987):  
*Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.*
- Three Dimensions





# Federal Constitution

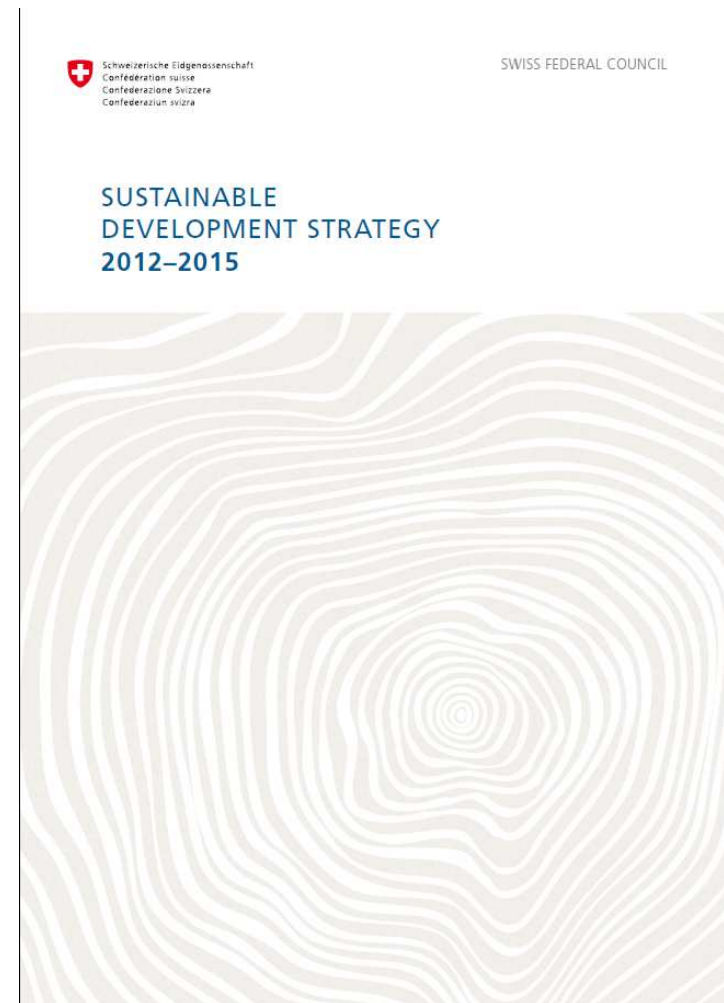
Sustainable development is a national target contained in the Swiss Federal Constitution:

- **Preamble:** [...] conscious [...] their responsibility towards future generations [...]
- **FC Art. 2 Aims:** (2) It shall promote the common welfare, sustainable development [...]
- **FC Art. 73 Sustainable development:** The Confederation and the Cantons shall endeavour to achieve a balanced and sustainable relationship between nature and its capacity to renew itself and the demands placed on it by the population.
- **FC Art. 54 Foreign relations :** (2) The Confederation shall ensure that the independence of Switzerland and its welfare is safeguarded; it shall in particular assist in the alleviation of need and poverty in the world and promote respect for human rights and democracy, the peaceful coexistence of peoples as well as the conservation of natural resources.



# Sustainable Development Strategy

- Constitutional mandate is implemented through the Sustainable Development Strategy of the Federal Council
- On 27.01.2012 the Federal Council adopted the Sustainable Development Strategy 2012-2015.





# Why a Rio+20 Conference?

- Continuing a series of UN Conferences:
  - **1972 UN Conference on Human Environment** (Stockholm)
  - **1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development** (Rio)
  - **2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development** (Johannesburg)
- Proposal from the Brazil's President at that time
- Little enthusiasm from OECD countries, long discussions
- Finally: UN General Assembly decision on the implementation of United Nations Conference on **Sustainable Development** (20.-22. June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro)



# The aim and focus of Rio +20

[A/RES/64/236; §20(a)]

- The objective of the Conference will be to **secure renewed political commitment** for sustainable development, **assessing the progress** to date and the remaining **gaps in the implementation** of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and **addressing new and emerging challenges**.
- The focus of the Conference will include the following themes to be discussed ...: a **green economy** in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and the **institutional framework for sustainable development**;
- The Conference will result in a **focused political document**.

# **Compromise decision between developed and developing countries**

## **Developing countries**

- Conference at the highest political level.
- Assessment of progress and remaining gaps in the implementation.
- Addressing new and emerging issues.

## **Developed countries**

- Focused agenda, not a big summit about all aspects of sustainable development:
  - Green Economy
  - Institutional framework
- Limited time for preparation and for the conference
- Focused political outcome



# The aim and focus of Rio +20

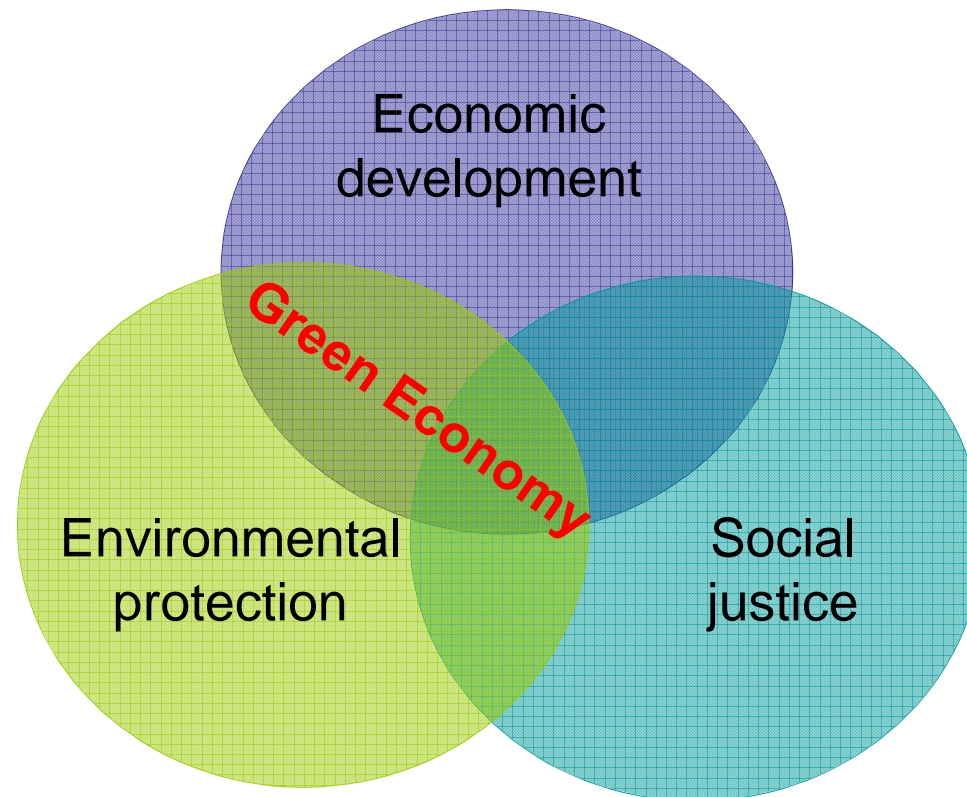
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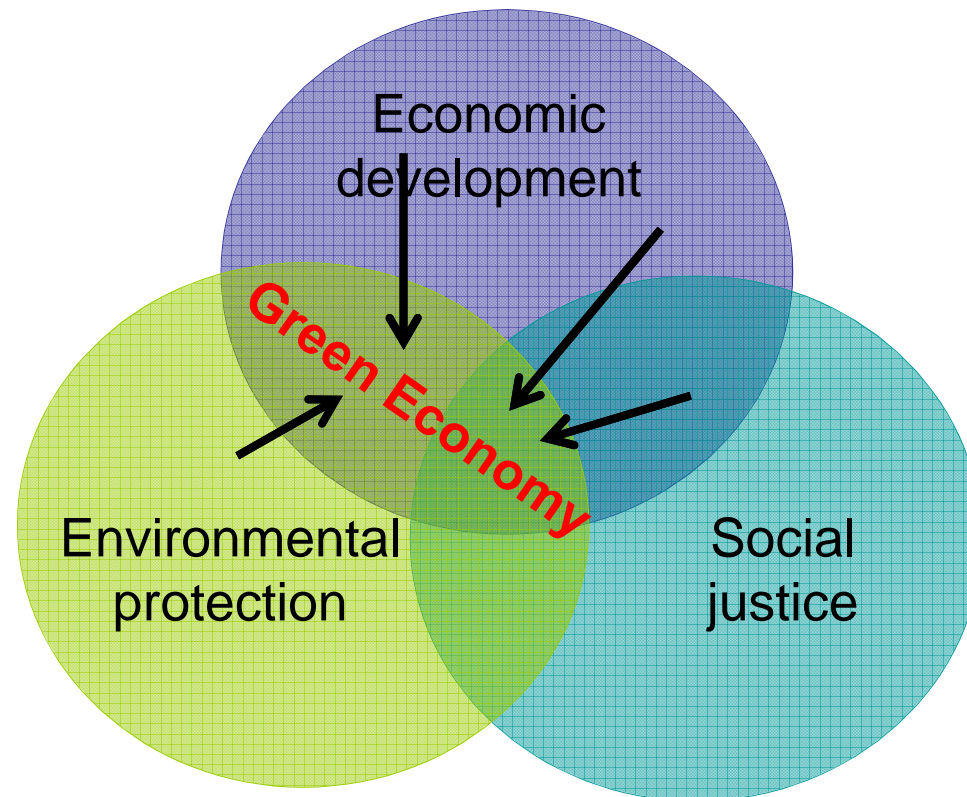


# Green economy as a means to achieve sustainable development



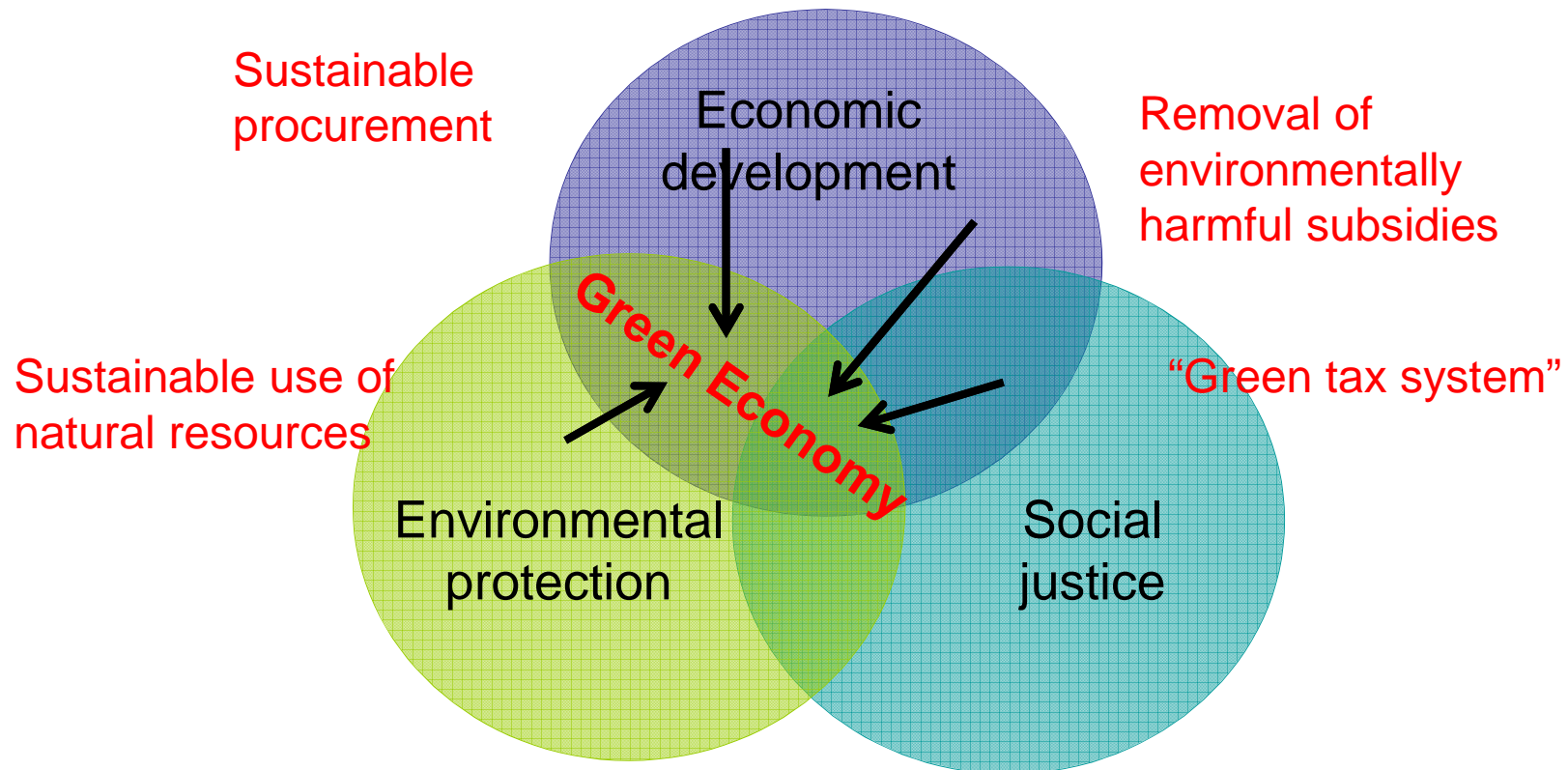


# Green economy as a means to achieve sustainable development





# Green economy as a means to achieve sustainable development





# Swiss expectations from the Green Economy debate

- The transformation towards greener forms of economic behaviour is inevitable in the long run. We cannot consume more resources than we have available.
- Green economy is not a new concept, but perhaps a new opportunity.
- Green economy discussion must take place in the context of sustainable development and poverty reduction.
- Framework conditions should be adjusted and concrete goals and measures adopted. Ideally, they should be assembled in an international green economy roadmap.
- Projects and programmes such as Cleaner Production Centers and sustainable public procurement policies should be continued and scaled up.



# Green economy: scepticism on the part of certain developing countries

Critical voices:

- There is no common definition of a green economy.
- Green Economy only applies to developed countries
- Green protectionism („green“ as a problem):
  - Fear of new trade restrictions;
  - New conditionalities for development assistance;
  - Strategy for forcing developing countries to buy new technologies from developed countries.
- Market-based approach („economy“ as a problem)



## Objective and focus of Rio+20

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# Swiss expectations from the debate on the institutional framework

- Address the current weaknesses in the institutional governance framework.
- Concrete measures for reforming the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, such as the regular review of implementation, better experience sharing and more effective inclusion of civil society.
- Concrete measures for reforming UNEP such as establishing universal membership for its Governing Council, developing a system-wide strategy for the environment, and further enhancing synergies between multilateral environmental agreements.
- Confirmation of the relevance of regional, national and local sustainability governance.



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# New and emerging challenges as expected

Nanotechnology and nano materials

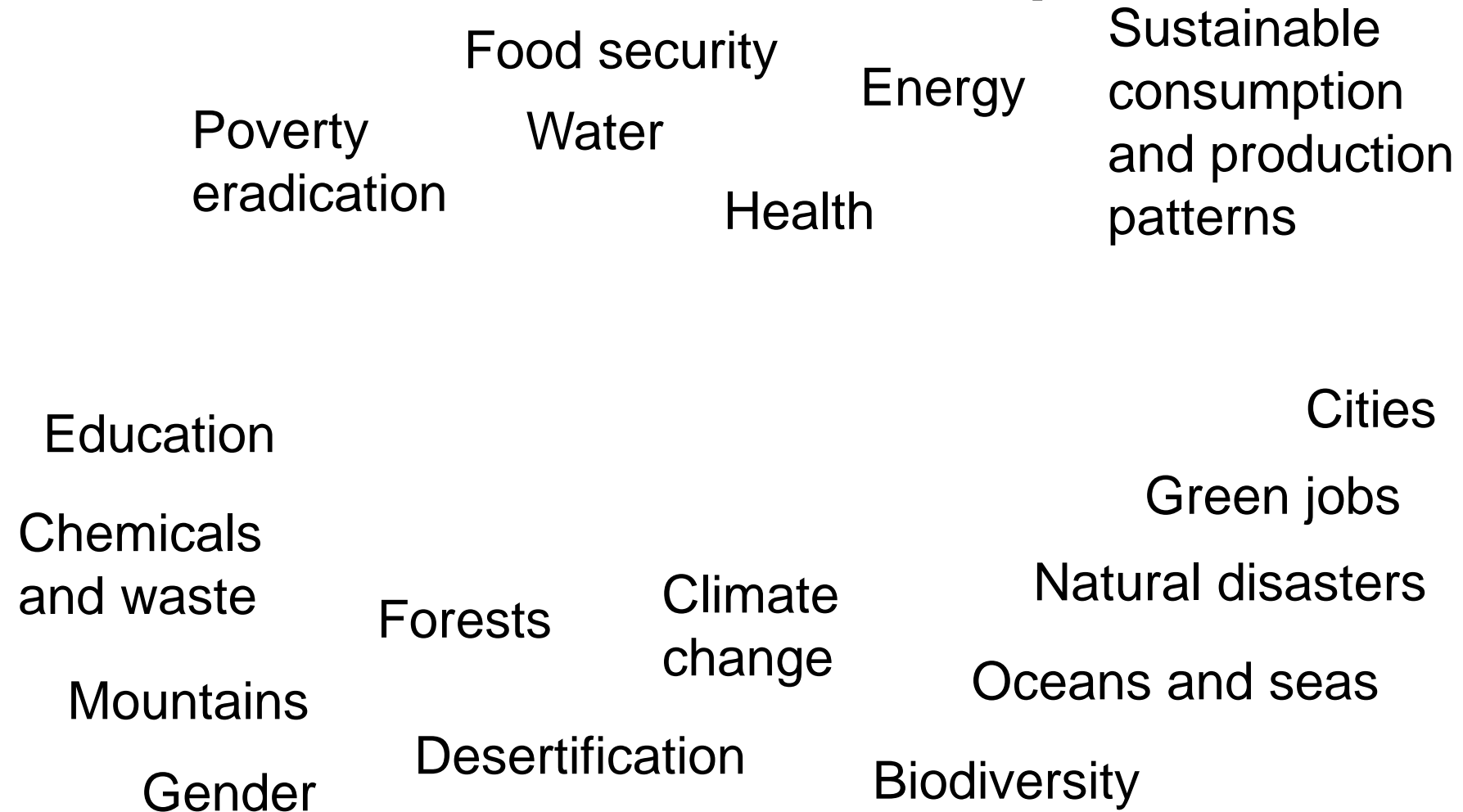
Plastic waste in the oceans

Ground-level ozone

etc.



# New and emerging challenges as understood in the Rio+20 process





# Swiss expectations from the debate on emerging issues

- New specific goals and measures for specific sectoral issues.
- Recalling main commitments.
- Providing a basis from which Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and their targets can be drawn.
- SDGs should take into account all dimensions of sustainable development.
- In Rio the criteria for SDGs, the process for their detailed elaboration and key priority issues should be defined.
- Balanced consideration of all dimensions of sustainable development and building on previous conference outcomes.



# Main objectives and results of major sustainability conferences

	Main purpose	Results
Stockholm 1972	Strengthening awareness of the environmental problems of the human beings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Stockholm Principles on Environment and Development</li><li>• UNO Environment Programme</li></ul>
Rio 1992	Integrating environment and development through the establishment of rules, policies and objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Rio Declaration</li><li>• Agenda 21</li><li>• Rio conventions (Climat, Biodiversity, Desertification)</li></ul>
Jo'burg 2002	Review implementation of Agenda 21	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Johannesburg Plan of Implementation</li><li>• Partnership Initiatives</li></ul>
Rio 2012	Renew political commitment to SD (with special focus on Green Economy and governance)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• <i>[„The Future We Want“]</i></li><li>• <i>[SD Goals]</i></li><li>• <i>[Register of initiatives]</i></li></ul>



# Negotiating Document

Structure of the negotiating Document (5 Chapters):

- 1) Our common vision
- 2) Renewing Political Commitment
- 3) Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication
- 4) Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development
- 5) Framework for action and follow-up

After the second round of negotiations:

- Down to 180 pages, 21 paragraphs agreed, 420 still pending.
- Little or no progress on main conference themes.
- Additional week of negotiations was added.



# Challenges for a successful Rio+20 outcome

- Difficult time for multilateralism in general.
- Set up of the process was poor from its beginning.
- New York is not a good environment for international sustainable development policy.
- Host country's vision and leadership have not been felt enough in the process.
- The state of negotiations and the lack of political will to get things moving are alarming.
- Reluctance by OECD countries to undertake financial commitments is a further difficulty.
- However, it is not only an issue of a North-South divide, but also South-South and North-North.
- A failure of the conference is possible.



# Opportunities for making Rio+20 a success

Nevertheless, Rio +20 could still be a success and make a real difference, in particular by:

- Establishing global Sustainable Development Goals, which will eventually replace the MDGs;
- Taking concrete decisions on institutional reform measures regarding sustainability governance and environmental governance;
- Agreeing on certain specific measures for greening the economy such as elimination of subsidies on fossil fuels; and
- Establishing new goals on sectoral topics.

