

DECLARATION OF SANTA CRUZ DE LA SIERRA

1. We, the elected Heads of State and Government of the Americas, gathered in Santa Cruz de la Sierra as decided at the Summit of the Americas held in Miami in 1994, reaffirm our determination to move forward toward sustainable development and to implement the decisions and commitments set forth in the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, which were adopted at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.

We also reaffirm the commitments undertaken in the Declaration of Principles and the Plan of Action of the Summit of the Americas.

We undertake to promote the agreements reached at the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, held in Barbados in 1994, and recognize the importance of the principles enunciated at recent United Nations conferences concerning sustainable development.

We support the efforts launched at the hemispheric, regional, and subregional levels, such as the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development, the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, the Treaty for Amazonian Cooperation, and the Permanent South Pacific Commission.

2. We reaffirm that human beings are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature and, as such, are the focus of sustainable development concerns. Development strategies need to include sustainability as an essential requirement for the balanced, interdependent, and integral attainment of economic, social, and environmental goals.

3. One essential feature of the Americas is their natural and cultural diversity. Our countries share a unique and rich political tradition grounded in democratic values and significant potential for economic growth and technological development in a context of open, market-based economies. These characteristics are of fundamental importance for the promotion of economic development and social welfare and for the preservation of a healthy environment.

We will adopt policies and strategies that will encourage changes in production and consumption patterns in order to attain sustainable development and a better quality of life, as well as to preserve our natural environment and contribute to the alleviation of poverty.

We reaffirm our commitment to the fundamental principle of the Charter of the Organization of American States, restated at the Summit of the Americas, that representative democracy is essential for peace, justice, and development. Sustainable development requires that we strengthen and promote our democratic institutions and values.

4. Recognizing that globalization, efforts toward integration, and the complexity of environmental issues pose challenges and offer opportunities to the countries in the Hemisphere, we pledge to work together.

5. We recognize that the needs and responsibilities facing the countries of the Hemisphere today are diverse. Sustainable development does not assume that all the countries are at the same level of development, have the same capabilities, or can necessarily use the same model to attain it. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, states have common but differentiated responsibilities in the global quest for sustainable development. We should make efforts to ensure that the benefits of sustainable development reach all countries in the Hemisphere, in particular those that are less developed, and all segments of our populations.

We will give special attention to the small island states, whose environmental vulnerability, especially with regard to natural disasters, is greater owing to their geographic situation, their size, and the scale of their economies, among other factors.

6. The alleviation of poverty is an integral part of sustainable development. The benefits of prosperity will only be attained through policies that address the interrelationship between human beings and nature. In developing policies and programs for sustainable development, special attention should be given to the needs of indigenous people, minority communities, women, youth, and children and to facilitating their full participation in the development process. The living conditions of persons with disabilities and the elderly also merit special attention.

7. We will establish or strengthen our programs, policies, and institutional frameworks in support of sustainable development objectives. National efforts should be complemented by ongoing international cooperation in furtherance of the commitments made at the Rio conference related to financial resources, and the transfer of technology on fair and favorable terms, including preferential terms, as mutually agreed.

8. We will support and encourage, as a basic requisite for sustainable development, broad participation by civil society in the decision-making process, including policies and programs and their design, implementation, and evaluation. To this end, we will promote the enhancement of institutional mechanisms for public participation.

9. This Summit Conference on Sustainable Development is the cornerstone of a partnership for cooperation among the states of the Americas in their common pursuit of a higher quality of life for their peoples, founded on integrated and complementary economic, social, and environmental objectives.

Taking the current experience of our countries and region as a point of departure, we hereby frame a plan of action that will commit the states to timely action and ensure the availability of the resources needed for that purpose.

10. In keeping with the principles stated above, we emphasize the following points regarding application of the Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Americas:

a. Equitable economic growth

Implement effective and ongoing measures to ensure that the international economic and financial system supports the growth of local economies and their sustainable development with a view to establishing greater social justice for all of our peoples.

Reinforce the mutually supportive relationship between trade and the environment by acting to conserve the environment, while safeguarding an open, equitable, and nondiscriminatory multilateral trade system, taking into account the efforts currently being deployed in this field by the Committee on Trade and Environment of the World Trade Organization. We recognize the great need of our countries to improve access to markets while maintaining effective and appropriate environmental policies. In this regard, we will avoid hidden trade restrictions, in accordance with the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade/World Trade Organization (GATT/WTO) and other international obligations.

Full participation by the private sectorXespecially small, medium-sized, and micro-enterprises, as well as cooperatives and other forms of productive organizationXin a sustainable development strategy essential to take advantage of its resources and dynamism. This strategy should balance comprehensive policies to address environmental and development problems.

b. Social dimensions

There is an urgent need to intensify efforts to reduce the poverty and the marginalization which broadly affect our societies, and especially women and children. We will promote, through the relevant measures and programs, including those established in the Plan of Action, adequate levels of nutrition, a greater degree of food security, equitable and effective access to basic health care and drinking water and to employment and housing, and we will seek to ensure pollution control and a clean environment for all people, taking into account, in particular, the most vulnerable groups.

We will also develop strategies that value human dignity while respecting and fostering the cultural diversity of our societies, gender equity, and educational programs promoting peace, democracy, and respect for nature, with special attention to children and young people.

In this context, the principles and priorities established in the Pan American Charter: Health and Environment in Sustainable Human Development will be put into practice as appropriate.

c. A healthy environment

Planning and decision-making for sustainable development require understanding and integrating environmental considerations, as well as social and economic factors. We will assess the environmental impact of our policies, strategies, programs, and projects nationally and in the framework of international agreements to ensure that adverse environmental effects are identified, prevented, minimized, or mitigated, as appropriate.

d. Public participation

We will promote increased opportunities for the expression of ideas and the exchange of information and traditional knowledge on sustainable development between groups, organizations, businesses, and individuals, including indigenous people, as well as for their effective participation in the formulation, adoption, and execution of decisions that affect their lives.

e. The development and transfer of technology

The development, adoption, adaptation, and application of environmentally sound, effective technology play an important role in ensuring sustainable development.

To this end, efforts to promote the transfer of, and access to, appropriate technology should continue in the Hemisphere. We recognize the important role played by market-based mechanisms and will promote opportunities for technology transfer through training and cooperative work programs and through improved access to sources of information. In addition, we will strengthen national scientific and technological capacities, complemented by international cooperation.

f. Financing

Implementation of the initiatives set forth in the Plan of Action requires the mobilization of financial resources in keeping with the commitments made at the Rio Summit. These should be complemented with innovative financing mechanisms.

In this context, we highlight the importance of international organizations and financial institutions in strongly supporting the efforts of the Hemisphere.

g. Strengthening of the legal framework

Relations between countries of the Hemisphere, within the framework of this partnership for sustainable development, will be grounded in the rules and principles of international law. We will consider the progress in international environmental law and promote the reform and modernization of national laws, as appropriate, to reflect sustainable development concepts. We will also develop national mechanisms for effective enforcement of applicable international and national laws and provisions.

We will seek to secure ratification of, or accession to, international instruments on sustainable development and will fulfill all commitments made therein.

Thus we sign the Declaration of Santa Cruz and adopt the Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Americas on this seventh day of December in the year one thousand nine hundred and ninety-six, in Spanish, French, English, and Portuguese.