

# **Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Americas**

## I. INTRODUCTION

We, the elected Heads of States and Governments of the Americas, convinced of the urgent need to advance toward sustainable development by strengthening social awareness, with a broad vision that promotes public participation, integration, hemispheric cooperation, equity, and social justice, with special emphasis on women, children, and vulnerable groups, commit ourselves to implement the first Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Americas, based on the principles of the Declaration of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, for the purpose of overcoming the most pressing problems faced by our people and assuring an adequate and decent standard of living for present and future generations.

## II. INITIATIVES FOR ACTION

### II.1 Health and Education

Recognizing that the primary challenges to the attainment of sustainable development in this area include:

- Development of a public awareness of economic, social, and environmental concerns, in order to open pathways for the transition of our societies to sustainable development;
- Equitable access to health services and improvement of their quality in accordance with the principles and priorities laid down in the Pan American Charter: Health and Environment in Sustainable Human Development, taking into account diseases related to environmental deterioration;
- Reduction of negative environmental effects on health, particularly those relating to mortality and morbidity among the most vulnerable groups, such as women and children;
- Increased access to education and improvement of its quality, with special attention to vulnerable groups such as women, girls, and children, in order to assure the training that is necessary for sustainable development;
- Strengthening of appropriate regional cooperation in the promotion of formal and non-formal sustainable development education and of communication to enhance their impact; and
- Establishment and/or strengthening of disease outbreak response and disaster preparedness, as well as disaster management institutions and their policies and response capabilities,

The Governments will carry out the following initiatives:

Initiative 1. Strengthen programs to increase access to safe drinking water, control and improve air quality, and upgrade health conditions with a view to reducing mortality and

morbidity among children and mothers, and establish environmental quality standards with the participation of civil society.

Initiative 2. Strengthen national programs, and those of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), for the control of emerging and recrudescing infectious-contagious diseases and for immunization against diseases of public health importance, for example, those diseases related to environmental deterioration.

Initiative 3. Promote mechanisms of hemispheric cooperation for the exchange of information and experiences on national policies and measures to reduce the effects of environmental problems on child health.

Initiative 4. Improve the coverage and quality of the health services available to the population, for example, services related to diseases arising from environmental pollution, with emphasis on primary care for the most vulnerable groups, giving priority to preventive and promotional aspects and to access to family planning information and services, with the participation of the various sectors concerned.

Initiative 5. Encourage changes in educational and communication policies, guidelines, and curricula to include instruction in sustainable development tailored to the different needs and realities of the Hemisphere, taking into account, where appropriate, multicultural and multilingual realities, and ensuring that they contribute to developing a social awareness of sustainable development. To this end, it is important to foster and create networks and mechanisms related to the exchange of experiences, teaching resources, and innovations in education and communication on this subject.

Initiative 6. Promote the inclusion of disease outbreak response and disaster planning, preparedness, and mitigation in national development plans; seek to establish, as appropriate, regional emergency response teams and regularly test contingency plans; and promote the establishment of appropriate building construction codes that include regulatory and enforcement mechanisms through the sharing of technical information and expertise.

## II.2 Sustainable Agriculture and Forests

Recognizing that the primary challenges to the attainment of sustainable development in this area include:

- Adoption of policies aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture, conservation, and sustainable management of natural resources;
- Development of a portfolio of agricultural production systems that seeks a lasting balance between their economic, social, and environmental components and enables farmers to enhance the value and productivity of their lands;
- Exchange of information and experiences through formal and non-formal educational programs that emphasize the critical role of agriculture in sustainable development;

- Development of baseline data on, and encouragement of access to, whole systems integrating research on economic, social, and environmental facets of sustainable agriculture;
- Involvement of agricultural producers and rural communities in priority setting and program evaluation in research, education, and training and in policy development relevant to the sustainable development of agriculture;
- Continuation, with renewed political commitment, of the international dialogue on forest issues initiated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests under the auspices of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development;
- Establishment and implementation of national forest plans and programs, as appropriate to each country, as important tools for sustainable management of forests developed through participatory processes that include all interested parties and take into account the multiple environmental and socioeconomic benefits provided by forests;
- Establishment of better forest assessment and management systems and of systems to facilitate monitoring of the sustainable management of forests so as to conserve biodiversity and maintain forest health, vitality, and productivity;
- Promotion of intersectoral policies and land use plans, as appropriate to each country, that encourage sustainable forest management and review of existing incentives, including agricultural incentives, that may adversely affect forests;
- Better definition, as appropriate to the legal system of each country and as necessary, of land tenure and property rights as a means to promote sustainable forest management;
- Promotion of appropriate mechanisms for soil conservation;
- Promotion of national forest management policies that respect and support the culture and needs of indigenous and local communities;
- Establishment and strengthening of national systems of parks and protected areas;
- Support for the generation of basic information on environmental criteria and indicators at all levels to evaluate progress toward sustainable management of biodiversity and the improvement of environmental statistics, in accordance with the processes which take place within the framework of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity; and
- Conservation of biological diversity, the sustainable use of its components, and the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the utilization of genetic resources, in accordance with the provisions of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity,

The Governments will carry out the following initiatives:

Initiative 7. Encourage the development and implementation of national and local strategies and, if appropriate, land use plans aimed at promoting sustainable agriculture.

Initiative 8. Promote agricultural export programs, including those that benefit small producers, and wider access to markets for agricultural products, in accordance with the principles of the World Trade Organization, and seek to determine the effect of economic policies on sustainable agriculture and rural development.

Initiative 9. Seek to formulate and implement programs to promote the development and adoption of integrated pest management and integrated nutrient management, as well as measures aimed at education in the use of agrochemicals posing risks to human health and the environment and in the effective regulation of their use and of trade therein, and encourage those that are currently being negotiated, in particular on prior informed consent procedures for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade.

Initiative 10. Seek to establish, as appropriate, education, information, training, and research programs and promote the exchange of best practices, to foster innovations in agricultural technology, including models for integrated farming systems that emphasize productivity, profitability, efficiency, and environmental protection. These programs should address the needs of small-scale farmers, poverty eradication, improved nutritional standards, and food security.

Initiative 11. Seek to establish, as appropriate, research programs which examine whole systems including ecosystem, whole farm, and watershed analysis approaches and develop economic and yield data for sustainable agricultural practices.

Initiative 12. Promote the conservation and restoration of soils through the application of technologies and economic policies to reverse soil degradation processes and to remedy the problems of significant soil erosion including in mountainous areas and, when applicable, problems that result from misuse of natural resources. Promote also hemispheric cooperation for implementation, as appropriate, at the national and regional levels, of the 1994 United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, with special attention to the appendix related to our region.

Initiative 13. Seek to develop, as appropriate, the capacities of local communities and of rural organizations such as farmer-initiated cooperatives, inter alia through information and training, in order to foster conservation and sustainable agriculture through programs in areas such as integrated pest management, soil conservation, water quality, crop diversification, and waste management.

Initiative 14. Promote national efforts and regional cooperation to improve the conservation and sustainable use of genetic resources for food and agriculture.

Initiative 15. Promote and support traditional agricultural practices which have a beneficial impact on agrobiodiversity.

Initiative 16. As appropriate to the legal systems of each country, seek to address social issues related to land tenure and land use conflicts in countries where they exist and promote sustainable agriculture under the various forms of land tenure taking into account the interests of all stakeholders.

Initiative 17. Continue to participate actively in the international dialogue on forest issues initiated by the Intergovernmental Panel on Forests under the auspices of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development. In this respect, it is necessary to give

full attention to all the program elements included in the terms of reference approved by the Panel.

Initiative 18. Seek to establish, implement, and monitor, as appropriate, national plans and programs for the conservation and sustainable management of forests.

Initiative 19. Develop appropriate mechanisms to promote opportunities for public participation in the sustainable management of forests, including on the part of indigenous and local communities, whose culture and needs should be respected and supported.

Initiative 20. Cooperate in the development of policies and comprehensive strategies for achieving sustainable forest management, bilaterally and through programs such as the International Model Forest Network, as well as consider ways and means to address the critical areas related to the transfer and development of environmentally sound technology, on favorable terms as mutually agreed.

Initiative 21. Support criteria and indicators at the regional, subregional, and national levels as mechanisms for assessing progress toward sustainable forest management. Continue to participate, as appropriate, in the ongoing initiatives relating to the development of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management, such as the Tarapoto and Montreal processes.

Initiative 22. Clarify, in accordance with the legal system of each country and as necessary, land tenure and property rights, including with respect to indigenous and other local community areas, and identify additional steps that may be needed to improve sustainable forest management under the various forms of land tenure, taking into account the interest of all stakeholders.

Initiative 23. As appropriate, seek the ratification of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna, and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, and seek the adoption of legislative, administrative, and other policy measures to implement the provisions or promote the objectives of these conventions.

Initiative 24. Develop, as appropriate, national policies and regulations on access to and protection of genetic resources, including endemic gene pools, and promote research on the identification and economic valuation of biological diversity.

Initiative 25. Promote, as appropriate and in accordance with existing legislation and agreements, and with appropriate input from local stakeholders, the identification of cross-border protected areas and national parks which the respective neighboring countries consider to be critical sites for biodiversity conservation. Further, promote cooperation among those countries with a view to improving the sustainable management of those areas.

Initiative 26. Promote research and training programs on conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity.

Initiative 27. Promote the exchange of innovative experience on partnerships for the management of protected areas.

Initiative 28. Consider, in accordance with the terms of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, ways and means for the effective protection and use of traditional knowledge, innovations, and practices of indigenous people and other local communities relevant to the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity, as well as for fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from such knowledge, innovations, and practices.

Initiative 29. Pursuant to the objectives of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, promote discussions on biological diversity at the inter-American level to propose substantive strategies with a view to overcoming the challenges related to the conservation, sustainable use, and fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising out of the use of biological diversity in the Hemisphere.

Initiative 30. Promote continued financial and technical cooperation at the multilateral, bilateral, and national levels and the development of financial instruments and funding mechanisms that support the aforementioned conventions. Promote at the national, multilateral, or international level as appropriate, inter alia, increased domestic public and private sector investments, risk capital funds, cost recovery mechanisms, and national environmental funds.

Initiative 31. Seek to establish an Inter-American Biodiversity Information Network, primarily through the Internet, that will promote compatible means of collection, communication, and exchange of information relevant to decision-making and education on biodiversity conservation, and that builds upon such initiatives as the Clearing-House Mechanism provided for in the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity, the Man and Biosphere Network (MABNET Americas), and the Biodiversity Conservation Information System (BCIS), an initiative of nine programs of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) and partner organizations.

### II.3 Sustainable Cities and Communities

Recognizing that the primary challenges to the attainment of sustainable development in this area include:

- Incorporation of the poorest and most disadvantaged sectors of the population into the productive process by, inter alia, creating jobs through public and private investment and expanding and enhancing access to credit and to environmentally sound technologies;
- Growth in job creation in small and micro-enterprises by simplifying paperwork, bureaucracy, and operations that affect them and by promoting the economic

- competitiveness and environmental efficiency of these production units in urban as well as rural areas;
- Narrowing of the housing unit gap and expansion of basic infrastructure services through a comprehensive approach to the problem of rapid urban growth, including the use of clean, safe technologies;
  - Promotion of the quality of life in cities and communities, taking into account their spatial, economic, social, and environmental circumstances; and
  - Assurance of the most efficient and least polluting industrial and transportation practices so as to reduce adverse environmental impact and promote sustainable development in cities and communities,

The Governments will carry out the following initiatives:

Initiative 32. Develop training programs, among others, to increase the efficiency and productivity of labor in order to raise the quality of life, particularly of marginal communities, with due regard for environmental safety in the workplace.

Initiative 33. Develop appropriate policies on migration, promote savings and investment opportunities to create jobs, and develop sustainable means of livelihood, in particular for the poorest and most vulnerable sectors.

Initiative 34. Foster job creation in small business and micro-enterprises, favoring their promotion and competitiveness through establishment of a legal and administrative framework, exchange of information and experience, and access to appropriate financial systems, markets, and clean and environmentally sound technologies.

Initiative 35. Request the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) to work with subregional financial institutions on the establishment of a support system for micro-credit institutions in order to promote technological innovation, improve the environment, and provide governments with technical assistance for strengthening financial services geared toward small business and micro-enterprise.

Initiative 36. Redouble efforts to meet the housing needs of the poorest and most vulnerable sectors, bearing in mind the need to provide adequate essential services and to improve the environment; and, to that end, request international and subregional financial institutions to lend the greatest possible degree of support to efforts to promote the construction of low-income housing and related infrastructure services.

Initiative 37. Foster the exchange of information and experiences to promote the use of environmentally sound technologies, including appropriate standards for building low-cost housing.

Initiative 38. Strengthen programs relating to urban settlements through partnerships between the public and private sectors for urban planning and development, taking account of environmental questions and the situation of landless and homeless persons.

Initiative 39. Promote international technical and financial cooperation, including horizontal cooperation, to carry out urban development and environmental sanitation programs.

Initiative 40. Develop legal, financial, and institutional frameworks which support local government involvement and facilitate private-sector participation in the financing and delivery of urban services and improved environmental management.

Initiative 41. Develop strategies that encourage policies and programs for prevention of and protection against pollution, cleaning up of the environment, and waste treatment, strengthening sustainable urban development. These policies may include public-private sector associations, market-based programs, and other volunteer programs.

Initiative 42. Develop a hemispheric framework for the exchange of information on and experiences in successful pollution prevention and waste treatment efforts as an appropriate means of managing the environment so as to support national policies in these areas.

Initiative 43. Promote the exchange of information and experiences among the mayors of the Hemisphere on the most appropriate practices for urban environmental stewardship, promotion of non-polluting consumer practices, sustainable transportation, environmental impact, and sewage treatment.

Initiative 44. Develop policies and programs to see that the poor and most vulnerable are affected as little as possible by environmental degradation and are able to share equitably in the benefits of environmental protection and, to this end, request the international and subregional financial institutions to support as strongly as possible the acquisition of environmentally sound technologies for their productive activities.

Initiative 45. Foster the inclusion of sustainable development in urban development plans, including mechanisms for evaluating the environmental impact.

Initiative 46. Promote cooperation in order to continue the development and implementation of national plans for the gradual elimination of lead in gasoline and the improvement of public transportation and other means of transport to make them environmentally sound.

#### II.4. Water Resources and Coastal Areas

Recognizing that the primary challenges to the attainment of sustainable development in this area include:

- Assurance and improvement of the conservation, sustainable management and utilization of water resources, including the development of integrated programs and institutional capacity;



- Prevention of the contamination of water resources and assurance that drinking water supplies are safe and adequate;
- Promotion of cooperation among countries at bilateral, subregional, regional, and hemispheric levels on water resources issues;
- Promotion of user participation in the decision-making process on water resources management;
- Conservation and utilization, in a sustainable manner, of inland, coastal, and marine water resources, including wetlands, in the region;
- Promotion of the integrated management and sustainable development of the marine environment and coastal areas; and
- Prevention and control of environmental degradation caused by pollution and the unsustainable use of inland, coastal, and marine water resources that threaten human health and the economic viability and environmental integrity of these resources,

Taking into consideration the social, economic, and environmental value of inland, coastal, and marine water resources, the Governments will carry out the following initiatives:

Initiative 47. Seek to establish, strengthen, and implement, where appropriate, specific programs, laws, and policies to protect public health by ensuring that drinking water is free from microorganisms, heavy metals, and chemical contaminants harmful to human health.

Initiative 48. Implement, in accordance with national laws and practice, integrated water resources management actions using watersheds and river basins as planning units whenever possible. These actions should include surface water and groundwater assessments and the preparation of strategic plans for water resource management, as well as the use of water utility revenues under local control, where appropriate, to fund watershed protection and the work of river basin authorities.

Initiative 49. Develop, strengthen, implement, and coordinate at the national or local level, as appropriate, water resources policies, laws, and regulations to ensure the protection and conservation of water resources.

Initiative 50. Promote hemispheric cooperation at all levels, including through the use of existing transboundary agreements and initiatives, in the conservation, management, and sustainable use of water resources and biological diversity. This would include the exchange of information and experiences on issues related to inland watersheds, river basins, and sub-basins.

Initiative 51. Improve access to appropriate and environmentally sound technologies, including through public-private cooperation and market mechanisms, and promote the transfer of information on policies and management strategies to accommodate the growing water resource demands resulting from rural, urban, agricultural, and industrial activities.

Initiative 52. Cooperate, in accordance with national legislation and relevant international instruments, in the development and improvement of pollution prevention and source reduction programs for agriculture, aquaculture, and industrial and urban activities, and integrate these efforts into national strategies. These should include actions to reduce risks to human health and the environment posed by pollution from chemicals and toxic substances that persist in the environment.

Initiative 53. Promote public participation in the planning and decision-making process related to water resources. Public participation could be enhanced through education and awareness programs in schools and local communities. Where appropriate, establish public-private partnerships to promote programs that encourage compliance with laws and the adoption of mitigation measures to address water resources issues.

Initiative 54. Develop and strengthen at the national and regional levels, as appropriate, research and monitoring capabilities pertaining to the conservation of inland, coastal, and marine water resources, especially in relation to environmental health parameters, including sanitary water quality criteria and the health status of coral reefs, mangroves, and sea grass beds. In this regard, consideration should be given to the work being done in the region, which should be continued. Data collected will be incorporated into a study that will document the current state of health of the coastal and marine environment; establish benchmark indicators for assessing the effectiveness of national, regional, and international instruments and initiatives; and identify and categorize land and marine-based sources of pollution.

Initiative 55. Develop and implement environmental education and awareness programs to promote sustainable use of coastal and marine resources.

Initiative 56. Promote the development or strengthening, as appropriate, of institutional capabilities at the national level or, where specific agreements exist, at the subregional level, especially in land use planning, coastal zone management, coastal engineering, environmental impact assessment, environmental protection and natural resource management laws, hydrography, fisheries and marine affairs management. This should be supported by promoting the establishment of a marine environment center for the Caribbean and the design and development of model legislation which could serve as the basis for national legislation that would provide an integrated and sustainable approach to the management of coastal and marine resources. Such model legislation should be consistent with relevant international treaties to which states are party and enhance the effectiveness of government policies and programs.

Initiative 57. Cooperate in the development, strengthening and implementation of pollution prevention programs and regional disaster mitigation plans, including contingency and response arrangements to combat oil spills and other forms of pollution which have an impact on water resources. This should include mechanisms to reduce current levels of marine pollution and, where necessary, the development and implementation of sanitary water quality criteria and effluent standards and guidelines.

Initiative 58. Develop programs at the national and regional levels, as appropriate, to implement the Global Program of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities, as well as seek to implement the relevant recommendations of the International Coral Reef Initiative (ICRI) as developed at the 1995 Tropical Americas Workshop.

## II.5 Energy and Minerals

Recognizing that the primary challenges to the attainment of sustainable development in this area include:

- Promotion in the Hemisphere of the most economically and environmentally efficient means of production, transformation, transportation, and use of energy, through policies and programs that facilitate bilateral, subregional and regional trade, in energy-related goods and services;
- Attention to global and local environmental concerns by making existing and future energy production and consumption cleaner and more efficient and by increasing the development and use of renewable energy and clean conventional fuels;
- Increase in the distribution of energy services to under-served areas, especially rural and indigenous communities; and
- Creation of an environmentally responsible and socially sensitive minerals and metals industry, recognizing the key role of mining in the development of the Americas; and

Noting:

- The Hemispheric Energy Ministers Meeting, which took place in Santa Cruz de la Sierra in 1996, where the key role of energy in advancing sustainable development in the Hemisphere was identified; and
- The First Annual Conference of Mines Ministers of the Americas, held in Santiago in 1996, which called for the economic, social, and environmental development of mining in the Americas,

The Governments will carry out the following initiatives:

Initiative 59. Recognize and support the work undertaken to implement the Summit of the Americas energy agenda, coordinated by the Hemispheric Energy Steering Committee, which promotes sustainable energy development and use by: increasing investment in the energy sector; promoting cleaner energy technologies in electrical power markets; advancing regulatory cooperation and training; increasing the economic and environmental sustainability of the petroleum sector; creating new opportunities for natural gas; promoting energy efficiency; developing rural electrification strategies; and sharing information on policies, programs, and projects to address climate change.

Initiative 60. Create positive regulatory and institutional settings to reduce barriers to energy efficiency investments and the development and use of renewable energy and clean technology projects which are economically feasible and socially desirable.

Initiative 61. Substantially increase access to energy services by under-served areas, especially rural and indigenous communities. In this regard, encourage community participation and cooperation of international agencies in the implementation, where pertinent, as well as in the financing of appropriate and efficient energy services.

Initiative 62. Promote the introduction of cleaner and appropriate energy production and consumption technologies and options, such as those involving alternative fuels, through public and private sector technology exchange initiatives.

Initiative 63. Encourage hemispheric, regional, and cross-border energy and mining cooperation by sponsoring consultations among the public and private sectors and civil society on specific issues relating to policies, trade measures, laws, tariffs, regulations, research, and institutional structures.

Initiative 64. Incorporate environmental policy instruments that mitigate and remediate the negative effects of local emissions, effluents, solid waste, and land use derived from the processes of production, transformation, transportation, and use of energy and of minerals. Such instruments include market mechanisms, incentives, voluntary programs, public-private partnerships, and regulatory initiatives.

Initiative 65. Ensure that the relevant issues contained in this Plan of Action are considered and acted upon at the Second Annual Conference of Mines Ministers of the Americas, to be held in Arequipa, Peru, in September 1997, and at subsequent meetings of this group.

### III. INSTITUTIONAL, FINANCING, TECHNOLOGY, AND COOPERATION ASPECTS

#### III.1 Institutional Arrangements

The primary responsibility for implementing the Plan of Action for the Sustainable Development of the Americas falls to governments, individually and collectively, with the participation of all sectors of our societies. To realize both meaningful follow-up and continued adherence to the cross-cutting dimensions of sustainable development, the Governments will:

1. Entrust to the Organization of American States (OAS) the role of coordinating follow-up on the various decisions of the Summit of the Americas on Sustainable Development. To this end, the OAS will convene the necessary meetings at the appropriate level. In particular, the OAS, through the Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development (CIDS), will review progress on this Plan of Action as part of its agenda. The Secretary

General of the OAS will prepare a report on such progress, to be made available prior to the 1998 Summit of the Americas, to which end he should:

- Gather the relevant final documents from all ministerial and other high-level and technical meetings which take place in the context of this Plan of Action; and
- Collect any national reports prepared voluntarily under this Plan of Action as well as other reports on the fulfillment of commitments and agreements adopted in the relevant fora on sustainable development, when these reports include references to initiatives undertaken in the context of this Plan of Action.

2. Request that the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), among other organs, agencies, and organizations of the United Nations system, to develop adequate mechanisms to collaborate and coordinate with the OAS within their respective areas of action and mandates, to support national, regional, and hemispheric efforts toward sustainable development.

3. Request the organs, agencies, and entities of the inter-American system, such as the IDB, the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), and the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA), as well as regional and subregional agencies, institutions, and programs in the Hemisphere, to develop adequate mechanisms to cooperate and coordinate with the OAS, within their areas of action and mandates, to support national, regional, and hemispheric efforts toward sustainable development.

4. Promote coordination and complementarity between the processes for follow-up and implementation of the Plan of Action of the Summit of the Americas and the Plan of Action on Sustainable Development. To achieve this objective the Inter-American Committee on Sustainable Development (CIDS) and the Summit Implementation Review Group (SIRG) should exchange the relevant information.

5. Cooperate in the establishment of a hemispheric network of officials and experts in environmental law, enforcement, and compliance in coordination with the OAS to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experiences and to provide a focal point, as appropriate, for carrying out cooperative efforts to strengthen laws, regulations, and implementation, as well as training in these areas for those states seeking such assistance, taking into account the studies prepared by the Inter-American Juridical Committee.

### III.2 Financing

6. Complement the efforts of the governments to implement the Plan of Action of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, by drawing on official development assistance, bilateral financial cooperation, and resources provided by the World Bank, the IDB, the Andean Development Corporation, and other multilateral, regional, and subregional financial institutions.

7. Based on the evaluation conducted within the framework of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on progress in fulfilling the financing commitments undertaken at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, and according to the information provided by the member countries of the OAS on the financial resources provided in accordance with paragraph 7 of the Declaration of Santa Cruz de la Sierra and other paragraphs of the Declaration referring to domestic and international financing measures for the purpose of implementing the Plan of Action, entrust the OAS with identifying response mechanisms, as well as ways and means of strengthening public and private financing for sustainable development in the Hemisphere. In performing this task, the OAS should have the assistance of UNDP, the World Bank, the IDB, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), among other hemispheric cooperation organizations and international financial institutions as well as relevant regional and subregional organizations. Proposals to this effect should be channeled for consideration through the follow-up mechanism described in section III.1.

8. Support debt reduction and reconversion programs at governmental, multilateral, bilateral, and private sector levels, drawing on the experience of countries that have adopted such programs, as mechanisms for encouraging the financing of this Plan of Action.

9. Support the policies aimed at the creation and strengthening of national environmental funds, as a mechanism to foster and channel national and international support for the initiatives to finance sustainable development.

10. Develop financial instruments which support sustainable use and conservation of biodiversity, including venture capital funds and scholarship funds for training persons, in particular those representing small businesses and/or nongovernmental organizations, in best sustainable development practices, in order to promote public-private partnerships.

11. Optimize the use of programs of existing multilateral, nongovernmental, and bilateral assistance agencies that offer funding and technical assistance for the start-up of projects related to clean technologies, the efficient use of resources, and the maintenance of renewable natural resources in support of this Plan of Action.

### III.3 Science and Technology Transfer

12. Based on the evaluation conducted within the framework of the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on progress in fulfilling the commitments undertaken at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development with regard to technology transfer and, in accordance with paragraph 7 of the Declaration of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, entrust the OAS, for the purpose of implementing this Plan of Action, with evaluating compliance with the commitments established in paragraph 7 related to scientific and technological knowledge, identifying the needs of the countries and existing obstacles, and proposing ways of overcoming them, including the development

of institutional capacity. The relevant proposals should be channeled for consideration through the follow-up mechanisms described in paragraph III.1.

13. Request UNDP to formulate a project supporting the establishment of a hemispheric network of sustainable development information systems (SDIS), as indicated in Agenda 21 and as one of the responsibilities assigned to the Sustainable Development Network Programme (SDNP). The network's objective will be to disseminate among the countries of the Hemisphere the information they require on economic, social, environmental, legal, institutional, scientific, and technological matters at the national, subregional, regional, and hemispheric levels.

14. Support the initiatives contained in the Plan of Action of the Hemispheric Meeting of Ministers of Science and Technology, held in Cartagena in 1996, especially those which lead to the development of scientific and technological capacity in the countries of the Hemisphere, to develop scientific and technological cooperation in support of the relatively less developed countries, and to strengthen multilateral initiatives taken in the region, such as by the IDB and the OAS and, in particular, through the Common Market of Scientific and Technological Knowledge (MERCOCYT) and others.

#### III.4 Public Participation

15. In order to support the specific initiatives on public participation contained in the Plan of Action, entrust the OAS with assigning priority to the formulation of an inter-American strategy for the promotion of public participation in decision-making for sustainable development, taking into account the recommendations of the Inter-American Seminar on Public Participation held in Montevideo in 1996.

16. The strategy should promote the exchange of experiences and information among government representatives and civil society groups with regard to the formulation, implementation, and improvement of sustainable development policies and programs, legal and institutional mechanisms, including access to and flow of information among the relevant actors, training programs, and consultation processes used at the national level to ensure civil society involvement. Establish consultation processes at the regional level, such as regular fora for government-civil society dialogue at relevant high-level meetings convened by the OAS, and when necessary support the integration and strengthening of national sustainable development councils, drawing on the experience of Central America and other existing councils in the Hemisphere.