



More than 100 Heads of State and government today gathered in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, for the start of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ([Rio+20](#)), which seeks to shape new policies to promote global prosperity, reduce poverty and advance social equity and environmental protection.

“We are now in sight of a historic agreement,” [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon said in his [address](#) to Rio+20’s opening session this morning. “Let us not waste this opportunity. The world is watching to see if words will translate into action, as we know they must.”

After intensive and protracted informal negotiations on how to accelerate the implementation of sustainable development, 191 countries reached agreement yesterday on the Conference’s outcome document. The text will now be put forward for adoption by Heads of State at the conclusion of Rio+20 on Friday.

“I am pleased that negotiations have reached a successful conclusion and I commend the Presidency of Brazil for facilitating this resolution,” Mr. Ban said.

More than 40,000 people – including parliamentarians, mayors, UN officials, chief executive officers and civil society leaders – are attending Rio+20 from 20-22 June. The event follows 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.

“We have been given a second chance,” Mr. Ban said, adding that since the Earth Summit twenty years ago progress has been too slow, and much more needs to be done. “Rio+20 is not an end but a beginning. It is time for all of us to think globally and locally.”

Rio+20's outcome document, entitled "The Future We Want," calls for a wide range of actions.

These include: beginning the process to establish sustainable development goals; 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.

"We think the text contains a lot of action, and if this action is implemented, and if follow-up measures are taken, it will indeed make a tremendous difference in generating positive global change," Rio+20's Secretary-General, Sha Zukang, said after the conclusion of the outcome document negotiations on Tuesday.

In addition to the outcome document, there have been nearly 500 voluntary commitments on sustainable development activities by civil society groups, businesses, governments and universities. In addition, the UN's Global Compact initiative, which concluded its Corporate Sustainability Forum yesterday, announced more than 200 commitments to sustainable development by businesses.

Source: [UN News Centre](#)