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*From Johannesburg, South Africa ...*

## **World Summit off to Rocky Start**

*By Dr. Michael S. Coffman*  
**August 28, 2002**

**A**lthough the weather was perfect, and the delegates friendly, the World Summit on Sustainable development started on a sour note on August 26. There is a very real prospect of failure for the summit which was not eased when thousands of credentialed delegates of Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) were excluded from attending the meeting.

NGO delegates were stunned to find out that after spending thousands of dollars traveling to Johannesburg and receiving U.N. credentials to attend the World Summit, they were denied entrance to the meeting. Over two thousand NGO delegates were turned away at the door of the convention center after standing in line for hours to get their credentials. They were told that out of the expected 12,000 NGO delegates that were attending, only 1,500 would be allowed to attend each day.

The disappointed delegates were told that because of restrictions imposed by the Johannesburg fire marshal, only 6,000 people would be admitted each day. All the official government delegates and press would be permitted, but the number of NGO delegates allowed would be restricted to 1,500. Flaring tempers and various expressions of outrage went unheeded. It seems the Sandton Convention Center, where the World Summit is being held, has a rumored maximum capacity of less than 7,000.

One woman from the Sudan claimed that her village had worked for eight months to raise the money to send her to the summit. She claimed her fellow villagers had spent more money to send her to the summit than they would each earn in a year - just so their voice would be heard. Now, it is unlikely that will happen.

The angry crowd kept asking the question, 'why did the U.N. encourage NGO participation, if they weren't going to let them in the door after they came all the way to Johannesburg?' Indeed, why did they even pick a city whose convention center held less than 7,000? Various speculations floated through the air. While the real reason may never be known, the disregard for the common person is yet another reality of U.N. global governance. The U.N. constantly trumpets the idea of "democratization" and "transparency" in their move to global governance, but their actions speak louder than their words. The people are expendable.

This strong-armed approach is creating a high degree of suspicion among the state delegations about the real purpose of U.N. sustainable development. Many developing nations correctly see sustainable development as a mechanism to keep them from ever getting their people out of poverty. There were sharp divisions going into the summit over trade barriers and subsidies given by developed nations to third-world farmers. These sharp divisions threaten to scuttle the World Summit.

South African President Thabo Mbeki set the tone of the meeting by claiming that rich nations don't care about poor nations. "It is no secret," said Mbeki, "that the global community has, as yet, not demonstrated the will to implement the decisions it had freely adopted" at the Earth Summit at Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Consequently, an avoidable increase in human misery and ecological degradation, including the growth of the gap between the north and south, has occurred." It is as though we are determined to regress to the most primitive condition of existence in the animal world, of the survival of the fittest," claimed Mbeki.

This 'blame the rich nations' diatribe is the same excuse used by developing nations for decades and only serves to widen the gap Mbeki said existed. While the trade barrier and subsidy issues are real, they miss the real reason why developing nations often have not been able to escape poverty - socialistic or totalitarian control over their own people. Instead, there is the clamor for foreign aid to bail out faltering socialist or totalitarian governments. Foreign aid, however, merely perpetuates failed government policy.

If an action plan for sustainable development is accepted at the World Summit, it will issue a major blow to the free world, especially the United States. The U.N./ Agenda 21 idea of sustainable development demands that government control property rights and people. Otherwise, how could the U.N. guarantee that the people of the world comply with its draconian mandates?

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