

Sustainability and Sustainable Development: the Use in Policies and the Ongoing Debate on These Terms

Velimir Pravdić *

Original paper
UDC 342.4:323(497.1:497.16)
Received in May 2002

This paper is a critical review of openly accessible literature, and of institutional reports, available at Internet sites, on the eve of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa. The event is marked as Rio+10, ten years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. In many ways papers, discussed here, are politically downplayed, or outrightly neglected in the mainstream advocacy of sustainable development (SD) by the United Nations system, its specialized agencies, the GEF, the IMF and the World Bank, and by some international organizations, like the IUCN. Most Governments, in developed and in less developed countries, and the NGOs in these countries, are ardent advocates of SD. The present discussion could be considered one-sided and biased, but the mainstream is represented in so many instances, that it would be useless to add another paper to this flood.

The discussions are centred around the interpretation and implementation of two concepts: of sustainability (SB), and on its derivative, sustainable development (SD). The emphasis in the paper is on the critique of these terms, and on the failure of their implementation.

Information extracted from the literature witness the fact that there is no uniquely accepted interpretation of these terms. Both terms, SB and SD, remain ideals that stand for the introduction of ethically based environmental management into economic development: no one is arguing these ideals. However, vagueness of meaning and fuzzy interpretation make them open for misuse and for special or group interests. Claims are made, and hypotheses advanced, that free markets, and market economies, as interpreted by the World Trade Organization, are not in harmony with the promoted ideals of SD.

The perspectives of the WSSD are still uncertain. In the wake of the terrorist attacks of September 11, many believe that a return to multi-lateralism of the main international actor, the United States, will give the development oriented WSSD another chance of success.

Keywords: sustainable development, environment

1. Introduction

In the multilateral international activities the times are characterized by the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg, South Africa. This paper offers some thoughts on the topic under discussion, its origin and meaning.

The term of sustainable development (SD) was institutionalised at the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, as a derivative of the concept of sustainability (SB) gaining prominence and acceptability through the International Union for the Conservation of Nature Strategy on Nature Conservation (IUCN, 1980). Although Barbara Ward, a British environmentalist and Member of Parliament, has first used the term of SD at the conference on Ecological Aspects of International Development Washington, D.C. in 1968 (Barrow, 1995), most contemporary authors assign it to the Brundtland Com-

* Center for Marine and Environmental Research, Ruđer Bošković Institute, and The Croatian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Zagreb, Croatia

mission Report of 1986 (WCED, 1987), due to its first attempt at definition. It is to a degree surprising how an ill defined term, devoid of a precise content, much less of an agreed upon definition, gained prominence, becoming at, or after the UNCED, a household term. No matter how much criticism has been raised against the indiscriminate use of this term, it holds an exclusively positive connotation among politicians, economists, sociologists, and even a majority of scientists. In this paper the present state of discussions on the topic of sustainability and sustainable development are reflected through information obtained from open literature.

In some activities and in caveats, expressed by the nongovernmental organization *Heinrich Böll Stiftung* in its publication entitled *From Rio to Johannesburg* (Trittin *et al.* 2001), a critical stance is taken, mostly because of the actual and possible political misuse of the term SD. The cause for apprehension is the relative debacle of the Rio+5 Conference in 1997 in New York (Hein, 1998), and the danger that the same mistakes will be repeated at, or after the Johannesburg Summit. Sachs (2002) is arguing that the Rio Summit of 1992 was an environmental event, with development pushed into the background. The unfulfilled expectations in development of the South, have resulted in plans to make the Johannesburg meeting essentially a development summit. Sachs (2001, 2002) claims that on a macro scale the reconciliation of environment and development agendas remain "light years away". The position of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung expressed by Trittin *et al.* (2000) is that SD can be effectively influencing national and world economies only if it is precisely understood, and if it is used as global concept rather than as a regional or local. The prerequisite is to find a common denominator in economic and environmental terms. If these conditions are met, the aftermath of the Johannesburg Conference will stand a chance to become a strategic and programmatic basis for action³.

A significant challenge for the World Trade Organization (WTO) is the transition from the present (classical) interpretation of environment in the framework of trade and development, towards a confrontational discourse on globalisation and the role of this organization, which, for all practical purposes, aims at becoming a world government (Stonehouse, 2000; Shrybman, 1999; Trittin *et al.*, 2001; Wright, 2000;). The role of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) is considered important (Trittin *et al.* 2001), although it has never been given the power of making decisions, nor a role in the preparation of legal documents or resolutions. CSD remains, however, the only forum at which SD can be discussed, and where the acceptability of some principles and their implementation can be discussed.

This paper aims at highlighting the ongoing discussion on the meaning and the value of terms such as SB and SD, as reflected in the open literature. The UN and its system of specialized agencies produce a large number of papers and documents that serve as apology for these terms. The same is also mostly the case with the IUCN – The World Conservation Organization, an international organization that should promote scientifically based strategies. Therefore in this paper politically motivated papers will find no place: this is not an oversight or omission. This paper is a critical review of the second opinion, one that is rarely, if ever, systematically presented, specifically not in UN documents.

2. The Discourse On Sb And Sd

Why is the implementation of any commonly accepted principles of SB and SD so utterly slow and inefficient on the global level? The shortcomings and the lack of clarity of these principles, as interpreted at the UNCED in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, have become apparent at the Rio+5 Conference in New York in 1997. Have the lessons been recognized, and have efforts been made to alleviate the present state of affairs? Persisting on the *status quo* of the last decade only the number of words in forthcoming declarations will increase, but those, who should be promoters and decision makers for the necessary changes, would apparently only demonstrate lack of interest and absence of political will.

2.1. Critique of the terms SB and SD in the last ten years

The early criticism of SB was made by Munro (1994) who admits the pervasive need for this concept, yet objects the use of the derivative, SD, for a number of shortcomings. The biggest danger is the misuse of these terms for specific, and sometimes hidden interests (Cairns, 1998; Holling, 2000; Münck, 1999; Papastavrou, 1998; Phillis and Andriantiatsaholiniaina, 2001;). Munro (1994) points to the vested interests of those who own and control modern technology. Shrybman (1999) extends this critique to the WTO who is, in his view, responsible for creating economic and trade conditions on the global scale, that serve these special interests. While some authors (Feiock and Stream, 2001; Langhelle, 2000; Zoeteman, 2001) refrain from accusing the WTO directly, they indicate the growing problems of the global environment in direct correlation with the growth of world economies and global trade. They concede, however, that in the past decade of "sustainable development" only the North has benefited.

2.2. Attempts at interpretation and implementation of SB and SD

Barrow (1995) analyses the genesis of these terms and emphasizes that they may be understood only in the interaction of economic, social and environmental systems. In a liberal sense, only in the interaction of these three systems the market economies are possible. Authoritative decision-making endangers the free market economies, and represents for some transitional countries a virtual return to the centrally planned economies. In between these two extremes, the imprecise meaning of SD is to advantage to some social strata: in the confrontation between environmental concerns and economic development they advocate common acceptance of principles in the "mediating concept". Following Agenda 21, Barrow (1995) accepts both SB and SD if three prerequisites are met: (1) limits to population growth on the global scale; (2) use of technology to improve the use of resources and to restrict pollution; and (3) social transformation that will accept improved quality of life instead of quantitative economic growth. Of the three, only (2) is achievable in the short-to-medium term range; limiting population growth is a long-term endeavour that today seems almost impossible; and (3) is understood by a large number of the poor, lacking water, food and energy, that quantitative growth is the only means of improving their quality of life.

Marcuse (1999) shows that many deleterious projects, in particular in large cities and concentrated settlements, are indeed sustainable. There is danger that such programs or activities, serving the interests of some segments of population, become obstacles to radical changes and improvements. SB and social justice are not necessary in harmony. Neglect of social equity and justice is an impediment to SD as an environmental category. Marcuse is a strong opponent to the concept of *sustainable cities*. Cities and conglomerate settlements are bad examples of *carrying capacity*, by using more resources and energy than they produce; they produce proportionally more waste, than represented by global, or regional averages.

In a number of papers Cairns (1997, 1997a, 1998, 1998a) shows that criticism, coming from entrepreneurial strata, the concept of SD is denigrated as a tool of anti-technological and anti-industrial radicals, that value natural ecosystems more than the benefit of humans, and thus advocate limits to private ownership. Moreover, they accuse the supporters of SD for being against their model of changes in the social structure of nations and regions. This is, however, not true, since exactly the ideals of SD cannot be realized within existing political and technological systems. Eco-societal restoration is a crucial step in human – nature relationships, not the present notion of SD, notwithstanding how it is interpreted. To support his ar-

guments Cairns invokes the well known, yet unresolved paradox between sustainability and biological evolution.

Frazier (1997) quotes the editorial staff of the US National Academy of Science's periodical *Issues in Science and Technology* decision of 1994 (two years after the UNCED) that SD has no useful meaning, and is one of the most insidious and manipulative ideas to appear in decades.

Lee (1993) goes further stating that SD is a goal, like liberty or equality: not a fixed endpoint to be reached but a direction that guides constructive change. While many interpretations of SD in the last few years would go along with this statement, the political usage of the term is tilted more toward it as an achievable, finite goal, even an operational alternative. Lee (1993) argues, and Frazier (1997) concurs that with this interpretation of SD, the concept should be grouped with religious movements, not scientific methods. SD is according to Frazier, undefined objectively, infinite in its perception, and internally contradictory. It will continue to be a source of interminable confusion and misunderstanding, short of deceptions.

Dovers (1997), and Dovers and Handmer (1998) consider SB an umbrella concept under which many interrelated issues of environment and human development acquiesce, although unresolved. Dovers and Handmer (1998) concur with the opinion that SB is characterized by deep-seated contradictions between irreconcilable goals and directions. In the present debate on the global environment the profound conflicts are simply ignored.

There are many new roads the Johannesburg Summit is expected to initiate, and then, in the wake of that meeting, implement. (Buck *et al.* 2000; Khosla, 2001; Osborn, 1997, 2001; Sachs, 2001; Trittin *et al.* 2001). Carvalho (2001) raises criticism to the present endeavours in implementing SD, and finds the answers for the slow implementation of SD in the analysis of the international context of political economics. Indeed, there are abundant papers analysing the influence of the environment on political and economic policies. The reverse, papers analysing the influence of economic variables on environmental policies and resource management, particularly with respect to the influence of trade globalisation, are scarce (Sneddon, 2000), although this influence is evident. This, asymmetric state of affairs supports the analysis of Pielke (2002) that instead of making politics more scientific, scientists have accepted the position of making science more political.

Carvalho (2001) questions the international political economy context in relation to SD, and offers four hypotheses on the linkage of international economic structures and development models: (i) the structural context, (ii) historical processes, (iii) the centre – periphery relations, and (iv) the role of international

institutions. In the structural context the pressures are on maximizing profits: it is highly improbable that international actors would support measures, that, for the sake of SD, would enhance their economic vulnerability and/or undermine their relative position in the international system. Historical processes impede changes by which traditional positions of countries as manufacturers, sources of cheap labour, and sources of raw materials would change: a prerequisite for SD. The centre – periphery relations foster development in the framework of subordination of the periphery to the core. The free flow of capital, goods and services tends to externalisation of environmental costs: the imposition of environmental charges results in movements of affected industries. Yes, there are codes of conduct for environmental protection, however, these are mostly voluntary and ineffective for peripheral countries. The role of international institutions is, at best, ambiguous. The advantage in investments is given to centralized, large-scale, capital and technology intensive projects, and these reflect the interest of investors or assistance donors. The constant increase in consumption does not fare well with resource conservation, at least not on the global level. In all, Carvalho sums up, all these features are not conducive to implementation of global SD. A change in the development paradigm, a recognition of the need of change in attitudes and practices is, in this context, improbable. So is SD.

3. Trends in Rationalization: Environment and Economy

Science has identified most of the problems facing the problems of protection of the environment and resource conservation. The next move is in the domain of economic conditions and choices, mostly within the political realm.

3.1. The conceptual choice between environmental and ecological economics

Munda (1997) raises a question on SD: For whom? The average consumer desires to sustain his/hers present consumption, and, if possible, to increase it; the employees are concerned with maintaining their jobs. Now, if these requirements are met, SD is fine, acceptable, and should be pursued as a problem of environmental management. Environmental economists, followers of the neo-classical economics, highlight two basic issues: (i) environmental externalities, and (ii) rational management of natural resources, where allocation of non-renewable resources takes precedence. This school of economists holds the cost/benefit analysis a normal procedure in decision-making, based on accounting in monetary values, or at best, in some other,

yet mono-dimensional, value system. Capital substitution is permitted: natural capital can be substituted by man-made capital, if the latter is more productive. This school, accordingly, bypasses the problem of conservation of natural capital (resources). In recent years environmental economists have been severely criticised by scientists, mainly conservationists. The main argument of the critique is the multifunctional property of natural capital, and the fact that man-made capital is dependent, and functions only in conjunction with the natural. Substitution of multifunctional capabilities with mono-dimensional ones contradicts the idea of SB and SD. Ecological economists advocate this position.

Munda's statements are but a further elaboration of Viederman's theses (Viederman 1994, 1995) exposed in numerous meetings and published in IUCN's *Sustainable World* monograph (Trzyna, 1995). Viederman's theses are: (i) that SB is a social construct, indefinable within sciences and technology; (ii) that SB is only a vision of a desired future – conceding that a vision is an indispensable component of problem solving; and (iii) that SB is a process with a beginning, but no end. This makes SB qualified by social context and specific by location. With ideas like this Viederman opposes the advocates of globalisation and proponents of economic uniformity. Next, Viederman is challenging the idea of a global free market. Free, for whom? Free of what? For many unresolved questions of SB, answers are not found in the realm of economic efficiency, justice and equity. In many cases there is trade in *pollution rights*, but these *rights* are seldom, if ever discussed. Wright (2000) is supporting this criticism pointing to the fact, that money traders and executive officers of multinational companies have more power, than democratically elected heads of governments. However, Viederman (1995) warns that creating obstacles to market forces in contemporary economic structures results in development stagnation, and, if extended, in economic collapse.

3.2. Politics, SB and policy-making

Dovers (1997) makes an allegation that a consensus between politics and environmental policies is a prerequisite, but not sufficient to effectuate a positive change in societal attitudes towards the environment. The change in attitudes is a complex interaction of several components, having a temporal and locational dimension, of restrictions, of irreversibilities of some interventions in the environment, of the social and physical urgency for solutions, of unpredictable, uncertain and unforeseen events and their interactions in the environment and society, and of cumulative effects of long-term impacts on the environment. For a long time moral and ethical dimensions of impacts on

the environment have been neglected. Neither were answers found for new problems that have earlier been overlooked, or just did not exist.

Harrison (1998) opposes the engrained beliefs that technological innovations alone can lead to SD, and bypass the need for profound socio-economic changes. He identifies obstacles to SD in several domains: in social inertia that opposes changes in lifestyle; in a paternalistic professionalism, which justifies basic scientific research in order to better understand the world around us, while the newly acquired knowledge is hardly relevant for the introduction of SD; engineering, a pragmatic and practical discipline subject to established professional standards, that neglects the impact on the environment; and finally, forecasting, effectuated by linear extrapolation, ignoring the methodology of discontinuity and non-linear functions. Apparently, Harrison is in conformity with Dovers (1997) explicating politics, as the key factor to implement changes, not just the formulation of adequate policies.

3.3. Are SB and SD in conflict with science?

There are three unanswered questions on what SB is (Roseland, 2000; Viederman, 1995).

The first is: What is to be sustained? Ecosystem services? Biological processes and reproduction? Renewable or nonrenewable resources? The very nature of these questions points to arbitrary answers, based on preferences – individual, of some interest group, of a nation, or of a state structure.

The second is: What system do we want to sustain? The whole ecosystem or a part of it? The existing political, social, or economic system? The answers will differ depending to whom this question is addressed.

The third is: Sustain for how long? Forever? No one is seriously considering the latter; but it becomes obvious that SB calls for a temporal dimension. Biology offers several scales: the lifespan of a cell is relatively short; the life of an organism can be between a day and a hundred years, or more; the existence of a population can be very long, even several millennia. However, just on the population level evolutionary processes defy a scientific basis for SB.

The same can be stated for legal and economic systems. They do sustain themselves by constant change and adaptation to prevailing conditions and social needs, or by following technological innovations. Siebenhüner (2000) in his vision of a *Homo sustinens*, a human individual living within the requirements of SD, asks three basic questions: (i) what skills and characteristics of people are needed to implement SD? (ii) in what extent are people capable to fulfil these requirements, recognized in a trans-disciplinary scien-

tific perspective? and (iii) what prerequisites have to be defined to achieve SD?

Siebenhüner (2002) claims that in absence of an emotional component, a structure based on recognized ethical standards, changes that would lead to SB are improbable to expect. Even, if human potential exists for the implementation of SB, forces of short-term, myopic economic and technical /technological imperatives, of scientific paradigms, and of political ideologies provide for serious obstacles to implementation of SB practices.

Holling (2000) is reiterating the thesis, that SD, like management of regional or global resources, is not an ecological problem, nor an economic, nor a sociological one: it is an indivisible interaction of all of these. The problem is that an integrating theory of SD on this basis still does not exist. Time and again theories are advanced that highlight one or another disciplinary aspect of SD. The application of dynamic and evolutionary policies fails, probably due to the complexity of the social system. A way out of this unenviable situation Holling sees in analysing not the state of individual components of the complex ecosystem, but the small number of basic processes that govern it. Economists have recently embarked on discovering the underground processes that create new qualities in the economic system. Ecologists have been comprehending the complexities of nature for a long time, and have understood changes in terms of fast and slow processes, some of them global, some localized, but those that help in understanding what complexity means. Information research has dominated social sciences helping to sort out, from a wealth of contradictory information, how harmony between humans and nature can be established. Integration, needed to formulate SD, requires recognition of the dynamic dimensions in all spheres of life. Until the integrating theory is established, SB and SD will remain short of a scientific fundament, and remain in the realm of political syntagms (Sunderlin, 1995).

4. Whither Small And Less Developed Countries?

In a recent review of a new book, Daly (2000) wrote some sombre remarks. While the IMF, the World Bank, the governments, all nominally favour 'sustainable development', he said, current development models do not face the hard questions and are therefore often worse than useless. Does not sustainability, even for an ecologically aware country, depend, among many other things, on population, a lower level of per capita resource use, a lower national and foreign debt, and a lower import dependence on imported food and energy? One may not agree with all of the criticisms of economics, but if the fundamental lessons are ignored, we do so at our collective peril.

Scientists have long been asking a crucial question: Is there any sense in pursuing the search for a meaning, or the definition, of terms hotly discussed, yet without visible results? Some find value in these discussions on the ground that they give an impetus to education for the environment (Jickling, 2000; Uhl and Anderson, 2001; Vargas, 2000). But even education has to aim for the recognition of educational values with the public at large; there is also an obstacle in intellectual exclusivism; and, most important, SB has to become accepted as a process, not a final goal. Jickling (2000) argues that if SB is just a direction indicator, education has to evolve and substitute the "for" (environment, sustainability) with "in harmony with". The task of education is in highlighting opportunities, not in predictions of future. In many instances, aware of the difficulties with *sustainable development*, politicians, governmental decision makers, and even scientists, have redirected their efforts to use and interpret *sustainability*.

Many of the educational efforts can fail. Jickling (2000) reminds us of George Orwell's famous term of *doublethink*. People are bombarded with contradictory explanations of the same term, with the result, that the term gets uncritically accepted and used, devoid of understanding. Jickling sees the future of SB only if it will be interpreted as a step in an integration process of positive thinking. That, but no more.

In interpreting SD Cifrić (2001) highlights the dichotomy of the term: it is both a description of structure and of a static state, as opposed by the characteristics of a process and its dynamics. This dichotomy is often overlooked in attempts to describe SD in terms of real and material objects. The task is impossible if the values of symbolic structures are neglected. In the same sense, if sustainability and diversity are desirable values, then the concept of SD is, in the absence of a better concept, the only one providing an anchor for a responsible relationship towards the oncoming generations.

Lay (2001) observes a general lack of vision, characteristic for societies in many small transitional countries, such as Croatia, and the never formulated strategies for economic development, as the main causes of slow, or inexistent implementation of SD. Such countries have never been able to establish the governance based on knowledge - a meritocracy. Transitional societies are mostly unaware of the values of their country's *natural capital*, and if they are, then only on a verbal level, not on the level of policies, attitudes, and collective and individual behavior.

The most serious dispute on the state of the environment, was, in recent times, provoked by Lomborg's (2001) book *The Sceptical Environmentalist*. Lomborg claims that most of the cotemporary worries of environmentalists the world over, such as the global temperature increase, the rise in global popula-

tion, and the scarcity of natural resources, lack solid scientific proof. Lomborg shows that in spite of all the doomsayers ("*the litanies*"), the world environmental situation is improving: the average life of individuals is on the rise, malnutrition is declining, and environmental pollution is being kept under control. Funds allocated to solve "priority" problems that are wrong, politically exaggerated and motivated, would be much better spent in pursuing social problems such as unequal access to resources, or in pursuing the goals of equity. Lomborg asks: Do we make correct decisions today, or are we just handing over our money purses? Lomborg is also a proponent of the cost/benefit methodology, a cornerstone of environmental economy. Conceding it or not, he states, this is the methodology by which both individuals and governments make decisions.

Lomborg has been criticised for using global averages, while most of the serious environmental problems are those concentrated in some regions. Even before Lomborg's book Bradshaw and Borchers (2000) draw a devastating conclusion: science and scientific research have failed to address some crucial contemporary calamities. As long as such a state of affairs persists, environmental and developmental decisions will be made in the political realm, based on political interests (Pielke, 2002). These interests are those of economically, politically and militarily large and strong states. Small developing countries have little to say, even less to contribute. Globalisation is the process to which they will be subjected, whether they consider, or feel, that it is not representing their best interests. Pielke (2002) points out the dominant reason for scientists' criticism of Lomborg's book: science defends itself as if the authors were speaking for science, rather than criticizing Lomborg's scientific claims and their significance for policy decisions. The distinction between science and policy advice is seldom addressed from within the scientific ranks. The belief of many scientists that "science" alone provides a sufficient basis for decision-making, leads only to the politization of science.

One example is the Mediterranean. Of the 18 riparian states, only two are economic powers (France and Italy), two more are members of the wealthy European Union (Spain and Greece), and one is in a special position (Israel); all of the others (13) are just followers. The Mediterranean is a region where North and South meet, their interests and economies intertwined. The ideas of what the North desires to sustain differs on a large scale from what the South expects. The most vocal promoters of SB and SD are the first four countries, since they control advanced technology, including military, tourist industries, shipping, and industry, and of course consumption. The rest of the countries are just compelled to follow, or will be left out of the game.

In spite of all the declarations, like the Mediterranean declaration for the Johannesburg Summit (MAP, 2000), accepting sustainable development, the failures of the last two or three decades are evident: (i) population is increasing at an alarming rate due to the phenomenon termed *littoralisation*; (ii) consumption of potable and fresh water exceeds available supplies; (iii) fossil fuel consumption, specifically of oil and gas, is on the increase; (iv) wastewater treatment facilities are few, exceptional, rather than commonplace; (v) solid waste disposal is an ever increasing, largely unsolved problem; (vi) tourist industry is booming as witnessed by the erection of new, mostly concrete buildings; (vii) the Mediterranean sea is crowded with pleasure vessels (yachts); (viii) over-fishing is depleting commercial stocks. The action: mostly words and declarations at a plethora of meetings; of concrete activities, worth mentioning, are only water quality monitoring programs. And, possibly, space planning and coastal management implemented in some places, but largely ignored. Most of these problems and their trends have been identified a quarter of century ago, at the time of adoption of the Barcelona Convention and its first four Protocols: these were the times, when a call for action was advanced without using the syntagm SB or SD. Nevertheless, the Mediterranean Declaration for the Johannesburg Summit (MAP, 2000), a 1800 words document mentions *sustainable development* 25 times, in addition to *sustainability* (6 times). It is difficult to expect the average population to understand what sustainable development means, much less to accept limitations to present economic activities, or a painful change in attitudes and activities.

5. Environment and Security

The events of September 11, in New York and Washington, D.C. have changed the perception of priorities in developed countries in a sense that still requires serious analysis.

Osborn (2001) offering his views on the condition of the world, six weeks after the event, warns of the reactions of many governments to concentrate efforts on responding to the immediate outrage. Commenting on the shortsightedness of such responses, he nevertheless judges the prospects of the Johannesburg Summit as uncertain. Would it be a development summit, rather than an environmental one? The alternative is, to his opinion, in a new vision. Indeed he offers 5 topics: (i) vision, (ii) development goals, (iii) finance, (iv) implementation, and (v) concrete governance. All of these topics, already well known, are in need of new directions. The new vision is in need of fundamental expressions of goals and values. Development is in need of concrete programs for action and partnerships. In finance the eradication of poverty calls for renewed

efforts to invest up to 7% of GNP of developed countries for development of the poor. At present the figures are from 0.1 (USA) to 0.3%. Agreeing on this could be the biggest single contribution of the Johannesburg Summit to SD. The implementation of international conventions and protocols, specifically that of the Climate Change Convention and of the Kyoto Protocol, would be an outward sign of hope for global multilateralism. He finally puts most of his hope that UNEP could be the instrument to unify efforts of governance on environmental and sustainable development issues, all of which are at present fragmented and weak. In his view UNEP should be given more latitude and raised to the status of a UN agency.

Saliem Fakir (Klotzle, 2002, p.28) quotes John Gray in *The New Statesman*:

"The west has greeted the collapse of communism – though it was a western utopian ideology – as the triumph of western values. The end of the most catastrophic utopian experiment in history was welcomed as a historic opportunity to launch yet another vast utopian project – a global free market." In the aftermath of the successful Bonn Summit on climate change and on the Kyoto Protocol, the "No to Kyoto" by the Bush administration, fell in line with the growing general tendency in the United States toward isolationism and, particularly, unilateralism. The prospects for the Johannesburg Summit were diminished (Haas, 2002). Then came the events of September 11. The reaction of the US government was surprising for a number of reasons: it was well-considered, rather than impulsive; it was integrationist, not isolationist, it sought to include, besides the EU, Russia, China and the developing countries of Asia and North Africa. Indeed, it was multilateral, not unilateral.

It is still early to grow huge hopes, but it seems that the necessary fight against terror will mark the birth of a new multilateralism. In this sense the Johannesburg meeting could offer development of new perspectives to both industrialized and developing nations. And a new chance for badly needed actions to preserve the environment and natural resources.

The crucial question still hangs in the air: What can small and less developed countries expect in the aftermath of the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development? Let this remain, for now, a rhetorical question.

Acknowledgement. The substantial help of Dr. Zdenka Konrad in collecting the literature references has been highly appreciated.