

## THE POST RIO+20 NEW ERA AT THE UNITED NATIONS

starts with a RIO+20 new attempt to develop a practice of sustainability. The next climate and development game will be played September 2012 on the UN General Assembly court.

This article by [Pincas Jawetz](#), based on a posting on [www.SustainabiliTank.info](http://www.SustainabiliTank.info), analyzes the preparations to the Conference, Rio at the time of the June 2012 Conference, and further meetings in Vienna held as part of the 54 International Congress of Americanists (ICA) that involved meetings we were not able to attend in Rio.

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We picked up at Rio a button that said - "STEP UP AGENDA 21 - RIO+21" - and we wondered if those that issued this button were listening to what was being said in the Conference at large. The honest truth was that AGENDA 21 was not in sight. The reality is that a RIO+21 must indeed be the launching pad of what the UN 67th General Assembly opening Statements of September 18th to October 1st 2012 must be ready to divine - and this might be something different from the outcome of the Rio Conference of 1992. It is therefore of real importance for the Heads of Delegations to prepare for the potential offered at the upcoming UN General Assembly. The "FUTURE WE WANT" MANDATES THE UN SECRETARY GENERAL to start the process at UNGA 67 in order to have proposals ready in place for UNGA 68. Interesting, material that reached us from the UN, does not mention the Commission on Sustainable Development, to be closed and lessons from the CSD to be passed to a new element to result from the deliberations of a Universal Membership High Level Political Forum. The fact that it is passed over in silence means to us that forces at the UN may still hope to undo above Rio decision.

1992 was specially a good year – the break-up of the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia, surely to different degrees, and on the other hand, Europe started out on an experiment of unification that emerged from a century of internal warfare, two World Wars, and the Marshall Plan revitalizing its Nation States. UNCED in 1992 seized on the 1987 Brundtland Commission's Sustainable Development concept, and Maurice Strong, present everywhere, since the 1972 Conference on the Human Environment, was able to maneuver the topic of Sustainability – the concept that bridges between our deeds now, and the needs of future generations, to the point that developing countries were able to see in their acceptance of the concept a way of obtaining funding for ongoing activities. All countries never measured up to the responsibility to future generations.

In the US, 1992 was the year of the emergence of strong Democratic leadership in Congress – to the point that Rio saw two separate US delegations – The official delegation, and the Senate delegation with Al Gore and Timothy Wirth holding the reins.

Europe had two delegations - the one anchored in the freshly signed Maastricht agreement for those countries that will be the first batch of EU member States, and the other group made up of Austria, Switzerland and Liechtenstein. Both of these groups were ready to link to the Al Gore US group, and the visions of conference leader Maurice Strong and Minister Klaus Toepfer, working for Germany, in order to shape up at Rio 1992 a UN position on the run.

The BRICS were not yet strongly positioned on the map, and the G77 were ready to accept the idea that money might come their way.

But now in RIO of 2012, Mr. Maurice Strong said that what we need to talk about is DEVELOPING SUSTAINABILITY meaning the understanding that Sustainability is about the future generations rather than development for profit in our times.

There was no RIO+20 Outcome Document. What helped the UN in 2012 was the emergence of UN "TEAM B" – the States of Bhutan and Brazil – to lead it out of the TOHU VAVOHU in New York and at Rio.

The Prime Minister of Bhutan and his aids introduced notions of substance – "Well-Being and Happiness," while the whole Administration of Brazil, President, Foreign Minister, the Diplomatic front

man and his large staff, taught us the potential of “Olympic Diplomacy” – a kind of Kissingerian diplomacy to provide something to every participant – so when an agreement is reached pro-forma there was not even a single loser – everyone claimed he had something he won - nobody got in full what he was bargaining for.

The Brazilian “COMMON VISION” when accepted by all UN Member States, was unchanged from the Brazilian paper, then renamed by the UN “The Future We Want” in line of previous releases from the UN. This was not in backing of the Vision, but rather in attempt to forget the Vision – and stress from the document the points close to official UN positions. In due time, nevertheless, some Member State will ask the UNSG to act according to the Brazil sponsored Vision, so we do not worry about mailings that we receive and that deviate from above.

In our opinion – it was paragraphs 84-86 of the Brazilian “Our Common Vision” – that became the UN’s “Our Common Future” – that include the essence of the potential of progress starting with the UN General Assembly – September 2012. But it seems that those paragraphs, the reference to Future Generations, and the reevaluation at the UN General Assembly of Sustainable Development, are missing in reporting to home base, in the major Press, and in evaluations by NGOs, as if rewritten from official UN Press releases.

I was at five debriefings held in Vienna - one was “Rio+20: Conference with meaning for Development and Environment?” The panel included Mr. Werner Raza, Head of the Austrian Research Foundation for International Development OEFSE, Mr. Alexander Egit, Director of Greenpeace Austria, and Daniel Bacher, Spokesman for the Advocacy for Africa at the DKA – all members of the official Austrian Government delegation to the Rio Conference.

At another debriefing called by By Professor Otmar Hoell of the Austrian Institute for International Polivy OIIP, Mr. Schoffman, Vienna representative of the Global Compact, and from the floor Dr. Leo Gabriel, an anthropologist and Journalist, added that there was more to Rio then the official meeting. There were agreements in the side events – in the business area and also in the Peoples Sustainability Treaties. Mr. Gabriel spoke of the “La Cupula dos Povos” – the Alternate Meeting at Rio that was apart from the official meeting and involved indigenous people. Then at the other end of the strip, green entrepreneurs displayed sustainable business ideas.

On July 14th there was the last debriefing of this series - “How do we go on from Rio+20?”- about the campaign against the “Green Economy.” They pointed at the power of language, and said it needs to be explained – THE FUTURE WE DO NOT WANT.

These speakers believe that much has happened at RIO+20, but this happened not at the official meeting but at the meetings of the business people. Some of these meetings were neither advertised nor open to non-invited guests.

They believe that a Green Economy is a business concept to give quantified value to nature so it can be monetized and sold as if it were a commodity. They reject the notion that it is supposed to improve human life while achieving an economic shift by resource efficiency and decoupling growth & resource use.

Their argument is that clean air and snow on a mountain are there and must be preserved – period – not because they have a financial value.

They saw in Rio future Commodification of Nature, while on the other hand there were people that came to protest the above. Iara was a coordinator of THE PEOPLE’S SUMMIT – and she told us that the Brazilian government provided some \$5 million to help organize the meeting – albeit far away (35 km. away) from the official site of the RioCentro.

Iara Pitricovsky, co-director, the Institute for Socioeconomic Studies in Brazilia, participated in meetings with the UN Secretary-General and told him that it was frustrating to see the limping process. Twenty years ago we were at the top of neo-liberalism and Agenda 21 – we tried to build it and failed. Part of the ideas from the Peoples’ Meeting reached Vienna July 15-20, 2012, with the 54th International Congress of Americanists (ICA) and made it clear - it is more complicated then we are thinking with our old search for development.

At the July 14th debriefing, obviously already part of ICA, Edgardo Lander, Universidad Central de Venezuela and Transnational Institute, Amsterdam, who at the ICA meeting co-chaired with the University of Vienna Ulrich Brand, on Thursday, July 19th the Symposium on Democratization and Transformation Perspectives, spoke the language issue – new things start with new language. Critical

economics started with things that did not take into account externalities, now the issue is this new commodification of nature. We need a defense of the Commons, of Mother Earth - different from the valorization of everything. Our actions have consequences – the planet has limits – the corporations have concluded that they have to take this into account, translated - green sector will produce greater profits than the brown sector. The World Bank thinks of the value of bees in fertilization of plants to be turned into bonds and sold on the market.

Jutta Kill of Fern UK, picked up at the business meeting she attended the phrase – “WE WILL TREASURE WHAT WE MEASURE” and says that this will be the new mantra of business in the effort to commodify nature. We see also a potential similarity between the Buddhist Bhutan stand and the indigenous people of Latin America. The Prime Minister of Bhutan, Jigmi Yoezer Thinley, with a large entourage of Ministers and Officials held a special meeting with the UNGA, on April 2nd, 2012, on Well Being and Happiness as targets of intent when talking about Sustainability and Sustainable Development.

New alliances are possible – such as between countries, mainly in the poor South, that are already suffering from effects of climate change, and more visionary countries of the North, that have a civil society ready to switch gears in the economy and move to new industries that are less polluting, resources saving and create jobs – a win-win-win situation for all! But the structure of the UN is itself fossilized, and the RIO+20 Prepcom was frozen.

Led by Foreign Minister Antonio de Aguiar Patriota, a Former Brazil Ambassador to the United States (2007-2009), and chief operational Ambassador Luiz Alberto Figueiredo Machado, the Undersecretary for Environment, Energy, Science and Technology of the Ministry of External Relations of Brazil – Figueiredo Machado with 30 other Ambassadors and Ministers – made sure to speak to everybody who volunteered an opinion, and note the minimums of acceptance in a secret draft.

Brazil, to play it safe, prepared also a second defence-line around the Rio+20 negotiations. I enjoyed in New York the resistance of Ambassador Figueiredo Machado to accept the idea that the meeting should actually be called RIO-20 because of the need, at the end, to come up with a new paradigm to replace the Agenda 21 that nobody was talking about.

BrazilDialogues was the second line of defense organized by Mr. Machado. We have much more on this in our full text. Please read it there. Eventually, a set of recommendations resulted from this second process and they will be attached to the outcome document.

Repeating what we see as the main point – please follow us to paragraphs 84-86 of the Rio Outcome Document, which have the secondary heading: “HIGH LEVEL POLITICAL FORUM.” We pick only a few most telling points:

84. We decide to establish a universal intergovernmental high level political forum, building on the strengths, experiences, resources and inclusive participation modalities of the Commission on Sustainable Development, and subsequently replacing the Commission. The high level political forum shall follow up on the implementation of sustainable development and should avoid overlap with existing structures, bodies and entities in a cost-effective manner.

86. We decide to launch an intergovernmental and open, transparent and inclusive negotiation process under the General Assembly to define the high level forum’s format and organizational aspects with the aim of convening the first high level forum at the beginning of the 68th session of the General Assembly. We will also consider the need for promoting intergenerational solidarity for the achievement of sustainable development, taking into account the needs of future generations, including by inviting the Secretary General to present a report on this issue.

What above means is that the UN Secretary General is mandated to establish under UN General Assembly rules, that call for full UN Membership:

(1) a universal inter governmental high level political forum to replace the existing non-functioning Commission on Sustainable Development.

(2) though leaving the term Sustainable Development in place, the above looks at Developing Sustainability instead – this by mandating the UN Secretary General to look at taking into account the

needs of future generations - "including by inviting the Secretary General to present a report on this issue."

The Brazilian Diplomats have accepted the need to consider Sustainability as the bridge to future generations when developing economies for the short sighted benefit of the current generation. Introducing the needs of FUTURE GENERATIONS gives for the first time the UN the sense of ethics required in full understanding of the term SUSTAINABILITY. A "Small Office" of a HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS that could be modelled after the example of the US General Accounting Office (GAO) could answer questions of impact on future generations by any ongoing activity or negotiations at the UN. Other working examples - Commissioners for future generations were tried by Parliaments of Israel and Hungary.

To summarize - RIO+20 as handled by Brazil - is a door to a new future that is going to rewrite the 1992 decisions that were not followed anyway. As said - it will be rather DEVELOPING SUSTAINABILITY then SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT, and in this respect the platform is only being developed, and the eventual funding will be forthcoming with South-South cooperation. We will have to be patient and see the changes taking effect. But this will happen only if governments remind the UN Secretary General of the outcome document specific language and ask for his acting accordingly - on the rights of the un-conceived yet - THE FUTURE GENERATIONS.



Pincas Jawetz is retired from having been an International Consultant on Energy Policy handling Alternate Energy and the NegaWatt. His main residence is now in Vienna Austria. His training was in Chemistry and Physics, International Management, and Business Administration. His experience started from new fossil fuel like oil-shales retorting in Spain (1959) to biofuels in Latin America, the US, and elsewhere as part of agri-policy, later on; then on from solar energy, and efficiency, to issues of Sustainable Development and Climate Change. On those latter topics he was directly involved in the UN International Conferences wearing various hats. As media he reported for Auto Free Times, Culture Change, and at present for [www.SustainabiliTank.info](http://www.SustainabiliTank.info)

For the Vienna Chapter of the Society for International Development he co-chaired a session on Biomass and Outer Space at the UN Vienna Outer Space Conference UNISPACE-82 - (a) growth experiments under no gravity conditions and (b) remote sensing for biomass inventory taking. He was also treasurer at the New York section of SID and NGO representative to the UN.



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