



OCCUPY RIO!

The Road to Rio+20

Why You Should Care and What You Can Do

From June 20–22, 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil,

heads of state, UN agencies, and global

stakeholders will convene for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) — commonly known as “Rio+20.”

The world is at a crossroads: the convergence of global economic meltdown and unchecked global warming is driving action in the streets, from the Arab Spring to the Occupy Movement. We must seize this momentum and use Rio+20 to force a paradigm shift.

Environmental and economic justice are intrinsically linked. Market-based strategies that commodify all of nature have increased inequality and failed to reduce emissions or protect ecosystems. In particular, this includes the falsely labeled international push for a “green economy,” which serves as a Trojan horse for further destruction of nature.

What Happened at Previous Earth Summits?

Budding awareness of the Earth’s resource limits led the United Nations to organize the first Earth Summit in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972. Results included creation of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Flora and Fauna (CITES) and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

Recognizing that far more needed to be done, 20 years later the UN held the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, a much-heralded world gathering of policymakers and environmental leaders. Altogether, 2,400 non-governmental representatives attended the formal sessions, with 17,000 participating in a parallel NGO forum. Results included creation of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, the UN

Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Convention to Combat Desertification.

Following these, the United Nations has conducted several world conferences including the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), meant to review progress since Rio. The UN’s annual Climate Change Conferences have run parallel to the Earth Summits, ranging from the Kyoto Protocol talks in 1997, to the dashing of hopes in Copenhagen (2009), to the isolation of civil society in Cancun (2010), to the recent outcomes in Durban (2011).

In each of these negotiations, market-based “solutions” have increasingly taken hold, including the emergence of carbon-trading markets that rely on offsets that are already directly harming the developing world and leading the planet to climate disaster. Unfortunately, carbon trading is the tip of the iceberg of the “green economy,” which is neither “green” nor supportive of a healthy economy.

What Is at Stake and Why Should You Care About Rio+20?

Measures intended to promote “sustainable development” have often led to increased poverty and food insecurity, forced displacement of indigenous and local communities, and violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, most particularly the right to food and means of subsistence, and the right to water and sanitation. We are facing an alarming loss of forests and biological diversity, accelerating pollution, and, most worrisome of all, the acceleration of global warming.

Despite the laudable goals of the previous Earth Summits, the “sustainable development” and global “free trade” paradigms have clearly failed to protect the planet. Rampant consumption with a race to the bottom for workers and the environment can no longer be upheld as the basis for “saving” the planet.

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What Is Civil Society Planning for Rio+20?

Although Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) were left out of the official preparations for the Stockholm and Rio summits, the UN is making space at Rio+20 for greater input and participation by civil society. The Zero Draft of the outcome document invited CSO inputs, and while it remains to be seen to what extent those inputs are considered, the fact that they were invited is “out of the box” for the UN and has served to galvanize civil society interest.

CSOs and international social movements are striving to transform Rio+20 into a popular mobilization. To that end, we are organizing a People’s Summit parallel to the event. For further info, see <http://cupuladospovos.org.br/en/> and <http://rio20.net/en/>.

Rio+20: Organizing to Save Our Planet

There are countless ways for people to contribute to the Rio+20 process. While many CSOs are participating in the formal process by submitting text to the outcome documents, attending the many preparatory meetings and lobbying governments, it is essential to organize actions and events at the national and local levels to protest corporate greed and false “green economy” solutions to the environmental crisis we face. We must connect the local to the global with clear examples of how policies affect environmental justice, and we must provide new global environmental policies that will save our communities and the planet.

What you can do:

- Share specific examples (written, photos, videos) of how market-based solutions are negatively impacting your communities — both human and environmental. Think outside of typical issue areas to build cross-cutting alliances and show broader connections — for example, by partnering with women’s and children’s rights groups.
- Lobby national representatives to reject the false “green economy” and adopt community-generated, local solutions.
- Develop specific policy alternatives in coordination with other stakeholders and promote these alternatives to both your own national representatives, and to other nations who may support them. Make the connections among environment, food, water, climate and social and economic justice to ensure that these solutions holistically address the foundational flaws of the current system.

- Come to Rio if you can! Side events (for accredited participants) and parallel events (for all stakeholders) are currently being developed.
- Hold a People’s Summit in your own community before or during Rio+20 to call for real solutions to climate change and the global crisis.
- Expose the Trojan horse of increasing corporate control under the guise of the “green economy” through policy arguments and real-world examples.

Note on accreditation: If your organization is currently accredited with the UN ECOSOC or on the CSD Roster, you can participate in the official forum (see <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?menu=75#5> for more info and lists of accredited organizations). If your organization is not accredited, there is a one-time opportunity to become accredited for Rio+20. Please fill out the two-part questionnaire found at <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?menu=90>. The deadline is February 20th to complete this process, after which you can register for Rio+20.

UNCSD Preparatory Meetings

See the UNCSD website (<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?menu=23>) for the Third Intersessional Meeting (March), negotiations on the Zero Draft of the outcome document (January–May) and the Third Preparatory Committee Meeting (June). Again, participation in these preparatory events requires ECOSOC accreditation.

Additional Resources

- Visit the Rio+20 website at www.uncsd2012.org/rio20 and sign up for the newsletter
- Join the NGO Ning group at www.rioplus20ngo.ning.com
- View the NGO Wiki site at <http://ngorioplus20.wikispaces.com/>
- Join the Facebook NGO Group at www.facebook.com/groups/rioplustwenty



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