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defined sustainable development as "development that meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

## **2. What was the purpose of the United Nations Conference on Environmental and Development (the Earth Summit)?**

The Earth Summit was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. It was attended by more Heads of State than any meeting in history and was convened to address urgent problems of environmental protection and socioeconomic development. The assembled leaders signed the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on Biological Diversity; endorsed the Rio Declaration and the Forest Principles; and adopted Agenda 21, a 300-page plan for achieving sustainable development in the 21st century.

## **3. What impact has the Earth Summit had?**

Since the meeting in Rio de Janeiro, sustainable development has become accepted as a foundation for public policy. It provides a framework within which each nation can debate how to orient its priorities in a manner that is consistent with the values of its citizens. The Earth Summit also spurred communities, states, and businesses to adopt sustainability principles and to develop sustainability policies.

## **4. Is the United Nations still involved in sustainable development?**

The United Nations (UN) created the Commission on Sustainable

Development (CSD) as a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The CSD reviews progress toward implementation of the Earth Summit recommendations and commitments; proposes follow-on activities; and promotes dialogues and partnerships that will further the transition toward a sustainable future. CSD holds annual sessions at which various aspects of Agenda 21 are discussed. Preparations are now underway for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) to be held in Johannesburg, South Africa, in late August 2002, the 10-year anniversary of the Earth Summit. The United States is preparing to participate in the WSSD.

## **5. How are individual countries responding?**

Since the Earth Summit in 1992, virtually every country in the world has embraced the principles of sustainable development. Many countries have sustainable development programs, often at the highest governmental levels, and are revising existing national policies to be consistent with the goals of sustainable development. Many countries, including the United States, are working to create national measures of progress towards a sustainable future. The United States and other countries are also cooperating to incorporate the principles of sustainable development in the work of intergovernmental organizations, such as the Mines Ministries of the Americas (CAMMA), the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Group (APEC), and the International Lead/Zinc, Nickel

and Copper Study Groups. In addition, the United States and 11 other countries have agreed to use a set of 7 criteria and 67 indicators to measure national progress toward sustainable management of forests.

## **6. This document is about minerals and mining operations. Why include minerals when they are a finite resource and not sustainable?**

It is true that individual mineral deposits are finite, but that does not mean minerals and metals have no place in sustainable development. Rather, sustainable development can provide the foundation for a policy framework that ensures minerals and metals are produced, used, reused, recycled and, if necessary, stored for the future (landfills) in a manner that respects the economic, social, and environmental needs of the local, national, and global communities. Within this framework, the benefits provided by minerals and mining are acknowledged, as is the reality that geology dictates the location of mineral deposits. Moreover, sustainable development makes good business sense because improving the efficiency of extracting and processing mineral resources creates both economic and environmental rewards.

## **7. Is recycling part of sustainable development?**

Yes. Durability is a fundamental characteristic of many minerals and metals. These resources can be converted into products, which at the end of their useful life, may be recycled, reused, or remanufactured into new products, or stored for future use,

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