

Statement by Ms. Katalin Szili
Speaker of the Parliament of Hungary
at the World Summit on Sustainable Development
Johannesburg, South Africa 03 September 2002

Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Ten years ago we came to an agreement on the fundamental principles of sustainable development and the actions that are indispensable towards sustainability. We did so, as we were convinced that sustainable development is not only one of the objectives of the societies but it is the sole feasible solution for providing equitable living conditions for current and future generations on global, national and local levels, which also requires the conservation of our planet's natural environment.

Since 1992 many things have happened in the world. Critical problems related to sustainable development were addressed by major UN conferences, global conventions adopted in Rio entered into force, new international agreements have been concluded. However, all in all, our world has not become 'more sustainable' in the recent decade, what's more, the situation has clearly deteriorated in several respects.

In Hungary, the 1990's were a period when the political system changed and substantial socio-economic transformation took place similarly to many other countries of the Central-Eastern European region. These changes involved the construction of a democratic institutional system and the transition to a market economy.

However, we talk about controversial processes both from the social and the environmental aspects if we keep in mind the criteria of sustainable development and specifically its long-term perspectives. Along this significant social transformation we had to recognize that social disparities and the gap in living standards substantially increased.

As a consequence of economic restructuring and modernization, the former resource-intensive sectors contracted. Consequently the pressure on environment decreased. However, this process coupled with a parallel increase in consumption that results again in a growing pressure on environment. Priorities of our participation in the international cooperation have also been thoroughly transformed and in this context, the accession to the European Union has become our highest priority.

We should realize that our ineffectiveness in terms of our overall sustainability objectives stems from lack of comprehensive strategies, action plans with concrete targets, more efficient institutional structures, and means of implementation and ultimately, the lack of properly coordinated actions.

We need to pay particular attention to improve the synergy among our institutions. In this respect good governance is of fundamental importance on every level and this concerns the social, environmental and economic policies, the respect of human rights and the rule of law. The role of various institutions, in promoting sustainable development should be enhanced. At national level, these include government institutions at all levels, parliaments, non-governmental organizations. Significance should be attributed to enhanced social solidarity, respect of human values, the ethnic and cultural diversity, the values of nature and halting the degradation of natural resources. We pay special attention to regional cooperation. Its importance was highlighted by such natural hazard, as the recent extreme floods in our region.

In order to change unsustainable processes, besides the actions by government authorities, the involvement of all stakeholders is an imperative. For an efficient social participation transparency, access to information are indispensable factors.

These principles and aspirations were taken into account when we were preparing for this Summit. We confirm and call all of you to reaffirm our commitment to sustainable development here. Its principles should guide the international cooperation and our domestic actions, as well.

Thank you.