



## **Australian Government**

# **Australia's Submission to the Rio+20 Compilation Document**

### **Introduction**

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) is a crucial opportunity to renew political commitment to sustainable development, and to set the agenda for the next twenty years.

This opportunity comes at a time when human activity is pushing ecosystems towards the limits of what they can sustainably bear – against what some scientists have called “planetary boundaries” in areas such as climate change, biodiversity loss, stratospheric ozone depletion, chemical pollution, ocean acidification, and depletion of fresh water reserves. At the same time, as the world attempts to improve social and economic conditions across developed and developing countries, the world has emerged from a Global Financial Crisis to face, yet again, the prospect of a waning global economy.

In order to meet these challenges, Rio+20 must:

- overcome divides between developed and developing countries to support practical initiatives to promote sustainable development that are people-oriented and have tangible impacts on poverty eradication and protect the environment; and
- underpin these initiatives with an effective and integrated institutional framework that is capable of managing new and emerging challenges, implementing existing commitments, and better enabling research, innovation and cooperation.

Australia recognises that developing countries, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, need assistance to achieve sustainable development. Australia will almost double its Official Development Assistance (ODA) between 2010-11 and 2015-16, to meet the Government's commitment of ODA reaching 0.5 per cent of Gross National Income (GNI).

As a dry island continent, Australia shares many of the challenges and opportunities faced by other countries. These include the loss of biodiversity and associated ecosystem services in terrestrial and marine environments, reduced water availability, (both of which are likely to be exacerbated by climate change) and the need to effectively manage our mineral resources. Australia is a mega-diverse and resource-rich country which needs to meet the challenge of protecting and managing these endowments for a sustainable and productive future. This submission

addresses both international and domestic challenges that Australia shares with other countries, and seeks to build on past experience and to grasp new opportunities together.

This submission sets out Australia's priorities for Rio+20. These cover three areas:

1. Enabling development of resilient and sustainable economies through:
  - better management of ocean resources;
  - sustainable growth of agriculture and aquaculture for enhanced food security;
  - improving access to water and sustainable energy sources;
  - conserving biodiversity and promoting the role of indigenous peoples in this;
  - addressing land degradation;
  - promoting sustainable mining practices;
  - supporting innovation, research and collaboration; and
  - effectively addressing key threats, especially climate change.
2. Addressing cross-cutting sustainable development issues, in particular:
  - more effectively mobilising finance;
  - promoting better measurement of sustainability and environmental accounting;
  - establishing sustainability goals and measuring progress;
  - using market mechanisms to reflect environmental costs;
  - continuing to empower women;
  - promoting and further developing education and training; and
  - encouraging universal access to modern telecommunication services.
3. Improving the institutional framework to support and drive sustainable development.

## **“A Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication”**

Australia recognises that Rio+20's pursuit of “a green economy, in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication” is a means of achieving sustainable development. Rio+20 should promote practical actions to address identified gaps in the implementation of commitments from previous summits, as well as new and emerging challenges. Australia proposes the following sectoral and cross-cutting priority areas for action at Rio+20.

### **“Blue Economy” and Oceans Issues**

World fisheries support 170 million jobs and more than 1.5 billion people rely on marine resources for their protein intake. Marine and coastal tourism, aquaculture and other uses of marine environments also provide livelihoods for millions of people.

However, the world’s oceans are increasingly under pressure from threats such as ocean acidification, overfishing, biodiversity loss, habitat loss and pollution. Key ecosystems such as coral reefs may soon reach critical thresholds, disproportionately impacting on the people and communities that are most vulnerable, such as small island and coastal developing countries. For example, the World Resources Institute *Reefs at Risk Revisited* report published in 2011 notes that approximately 75 per cent of the world’s coral reefs are currently threatened by a combination of local threats plus thermal stress. The report states that 90 per cent of coral reefs will be threatened by 2030 and all coral reefs threatened by 2050 if no protective action is taken. The impact this would have on incomes, food security and sustainable livelihoods would be potentially severe. Commitments in Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation to address these threats have not yet been met. Progressing sustainable ocean and marine conservation and management to achieve a “blue economy” is now an urgent sustainable development priority.

Ocean ecosystem considerations need to be better integrated into economic and social decisions with the objective of deriving economic and social benefits from the oceans in ways that are efficient, equitable and sustainable in both the short and long term. Within this context, economic and social development strategies should prioritise effective marine management in order to address poverty eradication, food security, sustainable livelihoods and conservation.

There are no “one-size-fits all” actions that can deliver a “blue economy”. Some required actions are global in scale, but most are required at local, national and regional levels. Australia considers that Rio+20 can play three key roles in promoting a transition to a “blue economy”. Firstly, to provide a catalyst and framework for action; to escalate oceans issues as a priority for governments, civil society and the private sector. Secondly, to promote and share lessons from existing blue economy-related initiatives, such as the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security and the Pacific Oceanscape Framework. Lastly, to identify and progress actions that require a global scale response.

In this context Rio+20 outcomes should recognise a number of “blue economy” objectives. “Blue economy” initiatives should promote the development of marine industries which sustainably derive ecological, economic and social benefits from marine ecosystems. They should ensure that ecosystem-based oceans management becomes central to industry and community development decisions. Rio+20 outcomes should build resilience and capacity to adapt to climate change and ocean acidification by communities, industries and ecosystems; while drawing on, and avoiding duplication of, existing efforts such as work being progressed under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Finally, Rio+20 outcomes should strengthen and support governance and institutions to facilitate an integrated approach to address shared objectives and challenges.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- a framework for action to mobilise efforts towards a “blue economy”, including:
  - improving information about the ecological, economic and social values of the oceans;
  - building the capacity of marine managers, policy makers and scientists, including by better linking scientific research efforts with management and policy frameworks, through education and other means;
  - strengthening existing regional integrated oceans management or establishing new regional frameworks that link national efforts to address shared objectives and challenges (using examples such as the Coral Triangle Initiative on Coral Reefs, Fisheries and Food Security and the Pacific Oceanscape Framework);
  - showcasing and promoting existing blue economy initiatives as a means of strengthening the political momentum and donor support that is key to their ongoing success;
  - facilitating the sharing of information, experiences and lessons learnt between blue economy initiatives;
  - engaging communities in the development of approaches to enhance the blue economy; and
  - developing improved metrics to monitor the state of oceans, coral reefs and other marine ecosystems;
- support for the proposed United Nations General Assembly process to ensure the international legal framework effectively addresses the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity beyond national jurisdiction by identifying gaps and the way forward, including through implementing existing instruments and the possible development of a multilateral agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS);
- further strengthening Regional Fisheries Management Organisations and Agreements by promoting sustainable fisheries and ecosystem-based oceans management approaches, to deliver improved economic benefits to developing countries and enhanced environmental outcomes;
- strengthening and encouraging the implementation of existing measures to combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing;
- elimination of marine capture fisheries subsidies that contribute to over-fishing and over-capacity while recognising the need for appropriate and effective special and differential treatment for developing countries and least developed countries, and a call for the conclusion of World Trade Organization (WTO) negotiations on fisheries subsidies; and
- commitment to optimising fisheries surveillance and enforcement asset allocation to enhance compliance with national and international regimes, including through promoting the wider implementation of principles contained in recent regional agreements\* with respect to:
  - pooling surveillance and enforcement assets among states; and
  - enhancing the use of modern remote sensing technologies.

\*For example, the 2007 Agreement on Cooperative Enforcement of Fisheries Laws between the Government of Australia and the Government of the French Republic in the Maritime Areas Adjacent to the French Southern and Antarctic Territories, Heard Island and the McDonald Islands.

## **Food Security**

Food security is a central global challenge which needs to be addressed urgently. Growing populations and changing diets are steadily increasing demand, with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) forecasting that global agricultural output must increase by 70 per cent from average 2005-07 levels by 2050 to feed the expected population of 9.3 billion. Experts forecast that food prices are likely to remain higher and more volatile than they were before 2008.

Price changes send market signals to farmers to increase or decrease production in response to changed market conditions. However, while higher food prices encourage increased production, continuing global agriculture and food market distortions, land and water resource limitations, rising input costs (such as energy and fertilisers), climate change, and increasing diversion of food crops to non-food uses (particularly for biofuel production), have the potential to restrict the supply response. This is compounded by high fuel prices which increase the cost of inputs, farm production and the transport and distribution of food. Food production is also fundamentally impacted by environmental degradation: in achieving food security it is essential that measures to boost production and productivity are environmentally sustainable.

The 2007-08 food price crisis highlighted systemic failures in global food markets, including the impact of longstanding global market distortions and trade barriers, thinly traded markets (for example for rice), and insufficient reliable market information. In particular, decades of subsidised agricultural production in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries, together with market barriers, disadvantage developing country farmers and discourage greater agricultural investment in those countries.

At the Group of 20 (G20) Agriculture Ministerial Meeting in June 2011, Ministers adopted an 'Action Plan on Food Price Volatility in Agriculture'. The Action Plan focuses on increasing agricultural productivity, improving international coordination (including the reform of the FAO) and the role of increased liberalisation of agricultural trade in addressing food security. More recently, Heads of Government of 53 Commonwealth nations adopted in October 2011 the Perth Declaration on Food Security Principles, namely:

- a. coordinated and timely regional and global emergency relief efforts to deal with immediate crises;
- b. undertaking decisive and timely measures to prevent crises occurring, mitigate their impact when they do and build resilience;
- c. delivering practical measures over the medium-term to make agriculture, including irrigated agriculture, and fisheries more productive and sustainable;
- d. strengthening support to government-led programmes and initiatives based on the spirit of effective partnerships;
- e. development of country-led medium to long-term strategies and programmes to improve food security and ensure alignment of donor support to implementation of country priorities;
- f. scaling up nutritional interventions, including those that target mothers and young children, and incorporating nutrition considerations into broad food security initiatives;

- g. enhancing research and development over the longer term to build a sustainable agriculture sector, including through the promotion and sharing of best agricultural practices, in order to feed and nourish the people of the world;
- h. strengthening fisheries and marine resource management in member states' waters to ensure sustainability of these resources for national and global food security, including through addressing illegal unreported and unregulated fishing;
- i. improving international market access for food producers, including smallholders and women, through trade liberalisation measures such as the elimination of tariff and non-tariff trade barriers and avoidance restrictions on food imports;
- j. addressing the impediments that are inhibiting economic opportunities for these important producers, including lack of affordable financing, local value-added and adequate infrastructure;
- k. collaboration between international organisations, donor countries, and national governments to address production, storage, waste reduction, elimination of post-harvest losses, transportation and marketing challenges; this collaboration could include more effective ways of meeting infrastructure financing gaps that engage the private sector; and
- l. improving the institutional framework for global food security efforts, including by supporting reform of the UN Food and Agriculture Organisations (FAO).

Rio+20 outcomes should commit to a program of action to boost global food security, including:

- improved emergency food responses;
- increased funding for agricultural and rural development to sustainably boost production and improve efficiency of market infrastructure and accessibility;
- concerted efforts to achieve a sustainable blue economy in marine areas;
- the liberalisation of trade and the elimination of trade-distorting agricultural subsidies and market barriers;
- the sustainable intensification of food production in terrestrial and marine ecosystems to achieve a significant increase in resource use efficiency and reduce negative externalities by 2050, with a particular focus on improving African agricultural productivity as a key potential element of the global solution to food insecurity;
- making women a key part of all efforts aimed at enhancing food production and productivity;
- increased support for international agricultural research, especially through the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research;
- reform of the FAO to ensure its leadership in the United Nations (UN) in supporting sustainable agricultural and food security initiatives; and
- incorporating nutrition considerations into broad food security initiatives.

### ***Water Use Efficiency: growing more food with less water***

Improved access to safe water and sanitation is fundamental to poverty alleviation. Compromised water security undermines key development objectives, including efficient food production. Despite international recognition of principles for good governance, commitment to water-related initiatives by governments has been slow, particularly in the area of adequately pricing water services and promoting water use efficiency.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- reaffirmation of the importance of improved information on water (including related meteorological and oceanographic information), improved governance, management and pricing of water resources, integrated and comprehensive water planning, enhanced water use efficiency, and recognition of the resulting increase in water and food security; and
- commitment to improving water access and water use efficiency at a national level, particularly for food production, through:
  - domestic institutional and regulatory reforms addressing water planning, and information, and developing markets in water access rights; and
  - technological innovation (for example in water recycling, crop types and irrigation infrastructure).

### ***Biodiversity Conservation***

Healthy biodiversity and resilient ecosystems underpin robust economies, human health, poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods. Rio+20 recommendations on biodiversity should reinforce previous international biodiversity commitments and build on the work of the United Nations Convention on Biological Diversity (UNCBD), which provides a legal framework for the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and fair and equitable access and benefit sharing of genetic resources.

Australia emphasises the importance of cultural practices and traditional management of natural resources in biodiversity conservation. Australia supports managing biodiversity at ecologically meaningful scales, looking at entire landscapes, seascapes, regions and ecosystems to deal with longer-term environmental trends, constraints and opportunities. Where landscapes, habitat or ecosystems are fragmented, measures to enhance habitat connectivity, including habitat corridors, should be utilised. While local problems need localised solutions, these should still be developed in the context of the broader landscape or ecosystem.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- reaffirmation of the importance of biodiversity conservation in a changing climate, highlighting the importance of management at landscape and seascape scale, using market-based mechanisms where appropriate, enhancing habitat connectivity, particularly through corridors, and building ecosystem resilience;
- recognition of the role the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services could play in progressing early consideration of monitoring and research programs that meet policy agendas; and

- recognition of the value of building on indigenous and community-based approaches to conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity using local community and indigenous ranger networks, and the opportunity for building practical skills.

### ***Desertification***

The international community has long recognised that desertification is a major economic, social and environmental problem of concern to many countries in all regions of the world. Desertification continues to present a problem today which has impacts on and is impacted by other global problems such as food security and climate change.

Rio+20 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the international treaty created to address desertification, the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). Following the 10<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties to the UNCCD in Changwon in October 2011, countries considered how Rio+20 might play a role in further addressing desertification.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- encouragement of Convention Secretariats, Parties and funding institutions to coordinate activities that synergistically progress the aims of all Rio Conventions; and
- clarification of the Rio Conventions' roles in addressing broader issues of soil and land degradation in the context of international environmental governance.

### ***Sustainable Energy***

The centrality of energy to sustainable development has been recognised with the launch of the United Nations Secretary-General's *Sustainable Energy for All* initiative. From job generation to economic competitiveness and prosperity, from strengthening security to empowering women, energy is the common foundation, and the basis for all modern economies. Access to secure, affordable, reliable and sustainable energy is critical for fostering social and economic development and improving livelihoods. Both the public and private sectors will have an important role to play in realising outcomes from Rio+20 on sustainable energy.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- commitment to achieving universal energy access;
- commitment to reduce global energy intensity; and
- commitment to expand the proportion of renewable energy used in national energy portfolios.

### ***Sustainable Mining Practices***

When managed properly, mining offers the opportunity to catalyse broad-based economic development, reduce poverty and assist countries in meeting their Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Australia supports actions to ensure the contribution of mining to sustainable development.



Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- ensuring mining is conducted under sound environmental management and contributes to opportunities for economic and social development;
- promoting comprehensive legal and regulatory frameworks and policies to facilitate sustainable mining practices and address the social and environmental impacts of mining throughout its lifecycle, including post-mine closure;
- recognising that open and transparent markets, as facilitated through the work of bodies like the G20 and International Metals Study Groups, are an important element of sustainable mining;
- encouraging the mining sector to adopt the Sustainable Development Framework and associated 10 Principles of the International Council on Mining and Metals;
- promoting the fair distribution of benefits from mining to the communities and citizens of producing countries according to national, sub-national and local sustainable development priorities;
- underlining the importance of transparency by governments and companies in the extractive industries and the need to enhance public financial management and accountability, as promoted by the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative; and
- enhancing linkages between mining and the rest of the economy to promote income generation, strengthen revenue streams, increase job creation and develop upstream and downstream industrial and service activities at the local, sub-national and national levels.

### ***Innovation, Research and Collaboration***

Australia considers that investing in innovation is critical to respond to the problems of the 21<sup>st</sup> century such as climate change, population growth, food security and environmental sustainability. It is at the core of economic transformation and is an important enabling factor for sustainable development. While market mechanisms are key drivers of this change, they also need to be supplemented by appropriately targeted transitional and innovative support measures. By working together countries can leverage off common interests, specialisation and expertise to help foster and spread innovations aimed at addressing these difficult challenges, while simultaneously making better use of resources, spreading risk, and building local capacity.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- promotion of innovative responses to address global environmental challenges and improve social, economic and environmental outcomes;
- promotion of participation and collaboration in international research and innovation networks to support sustainable development, with a particular focus on “grass roots” innovation and the opportunities for growth through increased transfer of developed economy best practice to developing economies; and
- inclusion of innovation as an important component of the UN work program on the “green economy”, through the development of a set of innovation principles, drawing on the United Nations Environment Programme’s (UNEP)

work on the “green economy” and the work of the OECD on eco-innovation and green growth. The innovation principles could:

- provide an overview of the key drivers of innovation;
- help to address barriers to improved collaboration, knowledge transfer and commercialisation; and
- identify opportunities for countries to improve their innovative performance.

### ***Climate Change***

The scientific evidence that the climate is changing is overwhelming and clear. We already see the social, economic and environmental impacts of climate change. Human activities, including the burning of fossil fuels and deforestation, are triggering the changes we are witnessing in the global climate.

Rio+20 will mark the twentieth anniversary of the treaty establishing the international climate change regime, the UNFCCC. Following the 17<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the UNFCCC in Durban in 2011, countries will be well-placed to identify the role Rio+20 can play in advancing global climate action.

This is the critical decade. Decisions we make from now to 2020 will determine the severity of the climate change our children and grandchildren experience. It is essential to transition to low emission development pathways if the world is to tackle climate change and achieve sustainable development.

## **Cross-Cutting Priorities**

### ***Finance for Sustainable Development***

Australia recognises that developing countries, especially the poorest and most vulnerable, need assistance to achieve sustainable development. Australia will almost double its ODA between 2010-11 and 2015-16, to meet the Government’s commitment of ODA reaching 0.5 per cent of GNI.

Global sustainable development will require large-scale, transformative investments. In developing countries, this cannot be achieved by ODA alone and will require leveraging private finance and investment in both developed and developing economies.

The public sector and the use of public finance, including ODA, will have a key role in providing enabling policy settings, regulations and incentives (such as innovative market-based tools) to catalyse private finance in sustainable investments.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- support for innovative and market-based financial solutions from a range of sources, including both public and private finance, to ensure that limited public resources are invested to maximum effect in sustainable development:
  - drawing on existing examples such as the G20’s work on infrastructure investment in developing countries, lessons learned from the Green Climate Fund design process and other relevant mechanisms;

- expanding the base of presently-available public finance by means of ODA-backed bonds, such as the model used in the International Finance Facility for Immunisation; and
- using public finance more flexibly and creatively to leverage private capital through risk-sharing; and
- commitments to increase ODA to assist the poorest and most vulnerable, to achieve sustainable development.

### ***Measuring Sustainability and Environmental Accounting***

Australia supports the development of robust mechanisms to collect, integrate and analyse information. A credible information base, particularly for environmental issues, is critical in this regard. The United Nations System of Environmental Economic Accounting (SEEA), soon to be an international statistical standard, is designed for this purpose, and Australia strongly supports its adoption.

Several international organisations and countries, including Australia, have developed frameworks or systems of indicators that go beyond the scope of traditional measures (such as Gross Domestic Product) to focus on broader measures of economic, environmental and social progress.

In Australia, examples of relevant initiatives include the Measuring Sustainability program, the Measures of Australia's Progress series, the National Plan for Environmental Information, and the development of a framework for the production of national environmental-economic accounts.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- agreement to develop credible frameworks for measuring sustainable development outcomes, including robust, consistent and accessible economic, environmental and social information, which promotes the integration of the information across these spheres;
- support for the SEEA as the international statistical framework for environmental accounting; and
- expansion of the UNEP's role as a 'hub' for environmental information sharing.

### ***Sustainable Development Goals***

Australia supports creating a set of internationally agreed Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a means to drive international efforts on sustainable development. In doing so, the relationship between the proposed SDGs and the MDGs framework would need to be carefully considered. SDGs will help ensure that Rio+20 initiates an ambitious agenda with milestones, measurement tools and support for the practical implementation of sustainable development commitments at all levels.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- agreement to develop a set of SDGs; and
- consideration of a reporting mechanism to track progress against the SDGs (for example a periodic Global Sustainability Outlook report).

### ***Market Mechanisms and Price Signals***

Australia supports the use of market mechanisms to ensure the environmental costs of production (externalities) are accurately reflected in the prices of products and services. For example, in countries without carbon pricing fossil fuel prices do not incorporate the cost of the negative externalities associated with the production and burning of such fuels. Putting a price on carbon through taxes, regulation or emissions trading systems can be an effective tool for securing emissions reduction at least possible cost.

In many countries the lack of pricing of externalities is further exacerbated by inefficient subsidies for certain sectors of the economy – particularly agriculture, energy, and fisheries. The current global context, in which many governments are experiencing fiscal constraints, provides an opportunity to reduce, or phase out, these inefficient subsidies. This should be accompanied by appropriate measures that protect vulnerable people from the negative impacts of any reform that may be undertaken.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- encouraging governments to set price signals that value sustainability – to drive structural change and move production and investment into more sustainable activities.

### ***Empowering Women to achieve Sustainable Development***

Australia supports efforts to promote gender equality and empower women. This challenge is central to sustainable economic and human development and to supporting women's rights. As long as the full potential of women to contribute to our economies and communities remains untapped, the debate and action around economic and environmental issues is skewed.

Women's participation in sustainable development is crucial to both the economic and social dimensions of sustainable development. Women face barriers to their full participation in economic, social and political life. Addressing these barriers is critical to reducing poverty, enhancing economic growth and democratic governance and increasing the well-being of whole communities. These barriers persist despite the evidence from both developed and developing economies that the increased participation of women generates faster and more equitable income growth.

The World Bank has found that eliminating discriminatory practices could increase productivity by up to 40 per cent. Governments should take up the opportunity of greater sustainable economic growth through enhanced female participation in the workforce by accelerating implementation of international commitments to advance gender equality and women's rights. This should include a particular emphasis on land and property rights; access to education and training; access to capital; sexual and reproductive health; freedom from gender-based violence; and full participation in economic and political decision-making.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- measures to reinforce the economic and social justice imperatives for women's participation in sustainable development;
- commitment by governments and the private sector to support women's economic participation and empowerment, including through adoption of the United Nations Women's Empowerment Principles;
- commitment to greater access to financial and technical support for women, including microfinance and technical assistance in agriculture,
  - as part of this, commitment to increase significantly the global scope of Women's World Banking and related mainstream micro-finance initiatives;
- commitment to mainstream the role of women in agriculture and rural women in economic development in all new policy initiatives relating to food security, recognising that women make up the bulk of the total agricultural workforce;
- reinforcement of the importance of considering the needs of both women and men in the provision of emergency assistance and social protection for the most vulnerable;
- commitment to ensure sustainable mining outcomes benefit both women and men;
- commitment to ensure that water reforms recognise women's role in water management in many countries; and
- commitment to ensure the framework for measuring sustainable development outcomes measures the impacts on both men and women.

### ***Education and Training: Empowering Youth***

MDG 2 aims to achieve universal primary education by 2015. A good quality primary education is essential for developing literacy and numeracy skills and is a basis for further learning. There is irrefutable evidence that education, especially for girls, is one of the best investments in development. More than 170 million people could be lifted out of poverty if all students in low-income countries left school with basic reading skills; this is equivalent to a 12 per cent cut in global poverty.

There are some obvious reform priorities. The global education funding gap is US\$16 billion, yet the current architecture of global education bodies lacks an organisation of sufficient scale and scope to tackle this challenge.

Both the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and the Global Alliance on Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI) can teach us a lot about how to get a better result for global education. They show us that if we work creatively we can leverage private funds, the value of which far exceeds global overseas aid flows. The time has come for a public/private institution with an explicit mandate for school education.

A global fund for school education which is effective and well capitalised would consolidate efforts by development partners and harness the resources of the private sector and the wider community.

The global effort to meet MDG 2 will also provide a foundation for the international uptake of education and skills for sustainability, particularly through vocational education and training. Skills for sustainability will be instrumental in driving and

supporting the global transition to sustainable development and innovative, low pollution and resource-efficient economies.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- commitment to building the Global Partnership for Education into an effective and well capitalised global fund for education that can harness the resources of the private sector and assist developing countries to achieve MDG 2 by 2015; and
- commitment to ensuring all young men and women are able to access a vocational education and training sector that is high quality, flexible and responsive to labour market needs, recognising that the transition to new sustainable industries will create strong demand for new skills and the need for Governments to facilitate the skilling up of workers for these emerging sectors.

### ***Communications and Information Technology***

Modern communication technologies are critical to social and economic prosperity and enhance sustainability on several fronts. They enable rapid access to weather forecasts, enhancing food security and early disaster warning information. In remote regions, mobile technology can give users access to information and services such as finance, health and education, and can connect small and micro enterprises to the larger market. Australia supports universal access to modern telecommunication services.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- emphasis on the need to ensure universal access to modern communication technology to facilitate access to information.

### ***Nineteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development***

Australia was disappointed at the failure of the Nineteenth Session of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD19) to adopt a consensus, including text on a Ten Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- incorporation of the key draft elements from CSD19, and in particular the Sustainable Consumption and Production text.

## **“The Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development”**

Australia supports reforms of “the institutional framework for sustainable development” (“IFSD”). Strong, effective institutions are essential if we are to drive global sustainable development. The two UN institutions that cover all three pillars of sustainable development – the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and its subsidiary body the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) – have had limited success in providing coherent governance on sustainable development issues across the UN system.

Reform of “the IFSD” should achieve a number of objectives in order to be effective. Rio+20 “IFSD” outcomes should seek to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development in UN decision-making and strengthen the environmental pillar of sustainable development to reflect the equal importance of all three pillars. Reforms should minimise institutional proliferation, streamline resource utilisation and improve coordination and coherence between agencies, including joint program-delivery at a country level, while respecting the mandates of multilateral environment agreements and the autonomy of their decision-making bodies.

Reforms should also strengthen links between the UN and International Financial Institutions, the private sector, academia, non-governmental organisations and other stakeholders. “IFSD” outcomes should facilitate and enable the implementation of outcomes agreed under the “green economy” theme of Rio+20. Finally, it will be important for a reformed “IFSD” to provide high-level political participation, coordinated governance and strategic direction across the UN system, with heads of UN agencies and from Member States.

Rio+20 outcomes should include:

- strengthening UNEP, including:
  - consideration of expanding it to universal membership;
  - strengthening its governance structures; and
  - strengthening its role in relation to the science-policy interface;
- development of a UN system-wide strategy for the environment to be progressed through existing mechanisms such as the Chief Executive Board and the United Nations Development Group;
- a mechanism for promoting sharing of experience among countries and enhanced transparency about national sustainable development efforts;
- transformation of the CSD into a significantly more effective organisation with an enhanced capacity to drive integration of the three sustainable development pillars (for example, a Sustainable Development Council); and
- consideration of how ECOSOC can better perform its role as the primary high-level decision-making body for all three pillars of sustainable development and how it would relate to other IFSD reforms.

## **Conclusion**

Rio+20 presents a global opportunity to recognise past progress on sustainable development and, more importantly, to set the sustainable development agenda for the next 20 years.

Australia welcomes the opportunity to work with other countries to share our expertise and contribute to regional and global initiatives. Australia looks forward to maximising this unique opportunity to set the stage for a common sustainable future for the next 20 years – to Rio+40 and beyond.