

Partnerships as an Instrument to Implement the Johannesburg Policy Targets

*Sascha Müller-Kraenner*¹

The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg, South Africa, produced some concrete new targets and partnerships in important policy sectors like energy and water. Yet it failed to address the world's biggest challenge: the reconciliation of the principle of sustainable development with the rapid process of economic globalization. This "mixed bag" of results is both a reflection of the lack of political will in the world's capitals to put the concept of sustainability at the top of their policy agenda, as well as a manifestation of the serious deficiencies in our current structures of global environmental governance.

Without doubt, the sustainable development community will continue to work with what has been achieved. In those areas in which the Political Declaration of Heads of States and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation do in fact reflect substantial progress, today's challenge is to make sure that implementation is not simply handed over to unaccountable actors and mechanisms. The Johannesburg Summit produced two sets of outcomes:

- Policy objectives and specific targets as described in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.
- A catalogue of proposed "Type II" partnerships, especially in the water and energy sectors.

The WSSD Secretariat's initiative to call for "Type II" partnerships between governments, local authorities, business, and civil society organizations was based on the recognition that international treaties and regimes can only set the framework for sustainable development initiatives. Implementation has to be achieved by and in cooperation with actors from all sectors –

¹ Director, Heinrich Böll Foundation, Washington, D.C. Office

public, private, and civil society. At the same time, the “Type II” partnership concept was intended to link sustainable development projects of different size, as well as a variety of actors, to the politically agreed objectives of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

Long before the Johannesburg Summit, companies, civil society groups, local authorities and other major groups formed innumerable partnerships on a regular basis. Public-private partnerships and cooperative efforts by industry and NGOs are therefore not an invention of the Johannesburg Summit. What makes the WSSD “Type II” partnerships different, however, is the linkage between those agreements and the more or less specific policy objectives of the Plan of Implementation.

Some examples may illustrate that link:

- The E.U. and U.S. water initiatives, as well as other proposed partnerships in the water sector, are meant to specifically focus on the two agreed targets on water and sanitation in the water chapter of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.²
- Energy-related “Type II” partnerships should refer to the less specific energy language of the Plan of Implementation. However, they should embrace the qualitative policy objectives that were agreed upon – for example, the support for renewable energies in Southern countries, as well as improved access to energy services, more sustainable market structures, and energy efficiency programs.³

² Halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of people without access to safe drinking water (reaffirmation of Millennium Development Goal). Halve, by the year 2015, the proportion of people who do not have access to basic sanitation.

³ *Renewable energy*: Diversify energy supply and substantially increase the global share of renewable energy sources in order to increase their contribution to total energy supply. *Access to Energy*: Improve access to reliable, affordable, economically viable, socially acceptable and environmentally sound energy services and resources, sufficient to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, including the goal of halving the proportion of people in poverty by 2015. *Energy markets*: Remove market distortions including the restructuring of taxes and the phasing out of harmful subsidies. Support efforts to improve the functioning, transparency and information about energy markets with respect to both supply and demand, with the aim of achieving greater stability and to ensure consumer access to energy services. *Energy efficiency*: Establish domestic programs for energy efficiency with the support of the international community. Accelerate the development and dissemination of energy efficiency and energy conservation technologies, including the promotion of research and development.

From my point of view, the challenge in the years ahead for governments and regional or global intergovernmental organizations will be to set the legal and political framework for such partnerships. Such a framework will have to include lean but effective reporting and monitoring requirements, as well as access to information on “Type II” partnership projects for affected parties and the interested public. “Type II” partnerships should not be allowed to become purely private endeavors, since they are, by their very nature, political animals that play an important role in the emerging system of global environmental governance.

Civil society organizations should not focus their energy and their scarce resources on monitoring public-private partnerships, but instead focus on defining and advocating for sustainable development policies. However, if civil society organizations get involved in “Type II” partnerships, they will have to comply with the same set of criteria as defined for other partnerships and orient their projects toward the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

