

**Center for International Environmental Law • Citizens Network for Sustainable Development  
• Global Forum on Oceans, Coasts, and Islands • Greenpeace – USA •  
National Wildlife Federation • Natural Resources Defense Council • Pathfinder International  
• Sierra Club • SustainUS -United States Youth for Sustainable Development •  
Union of Concerned Scientists • Women’s Environment and Development Organization •  
World Information Transfer • World Watch Institute**

September 29, 2009

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

We are writing, on behalf of civil society organizations representing more than a million Americans, to request that the U.S. Government enthusiastically support the proposal now before the United Nations to hold an Earth Summit in Brazil in 2012. We hope that you will see the Summit as an opportunity to consolidate the gains made in your first Administration towards sustainable development and to catalyze actions worldwide to build a new green global prosperity.

We do not have a moment to lose. During your July 2008 visit to Berlin, you articulated the urgency of our global challenges. We could not agree more that “this is the moment when we must come together to save this planet. Let us resolve that we will not leave our children a world where the oceans rise and famine spreads and terrible storms devastate our lands.”

The Government of Brazil is proposing bringing all of the world’s Presidents and Prime Ministers together on the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro. This Rio Earth Summit was historic in establishing international norms and institutions around the concept of “sustainability.” The Summit resulted in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change which is the basis for the further development of the international climate regime in Copenhagen this December. It also produced Agenda 21 – a blueprint for sustainable development – which stimulated actions in countries, states, and communities worldwide to address interlinked challenges of economics, equity, and the environment. In Johannesburg, South Africa a decade later, the World Summit on Sustainable Development made additional progress by recognizing that governments cannot achieve sustainability alone and need to work with citizen groups, international agencies, and businesses.

Yet, as recognized by the Brazilian Government in calling for an Earth Summit in 2012, much remains to be done to fulfill the promises made in Rio. In recent years, much attention has focused on our failure to take action on climate change, which, if unchecked, could undermine the security and well being of all nations. Yet climate change is but one of a number of growing environmental crises we face: depletion and degradation of our oceans and rivers, the accumulation of toxics, and rapid loss of biodiversity. We must recognize the extraordinary pressure upon the planet posed by the now more than six billion people that share it.

At the same time, it is critical that we reduce global poverty and inequality. Special attention must be paid to the disproportionate burdens that marginalized communities already face around the world.

The focus of the 2012 Earth Summit should be upon the *implementation* of the many agreements and commitments nations have already and repeatedly made to sustainable development – including a new protocol on climate change to be negotiated at the end of this year in Copenhagen. We need to reexamine and revitalize the various international institutions we have already put into place, such as the UN Commission on Sustainable Development. We also need to reassert a compelling common vision for the future and stimulate effective actions at every level of every society.

The last time a U.S. President participated in an Earth Summit was 1992. There is a whole new generation of leaders and a swell of youth behind them whose lives and understanding of the world will be shaped by the events in the next several years. As you told Ghana's parliament in July 2009, "above all, it will be the young people – brimming with talent and energy and hope – who can claim the future ...." The 2012 Earth Summit can concentrate the talent, energy, and hope of young people for perhaps the greatest series of challenges our species has ever faced.

As in 1992, the proposed Earth Summit will bring to Brazil leaders from government, labor, business, environment, health, women, youth, and other sectors of society and attract media attention worldwide. However, now with the new technologies, it will be possible to increase the reach of the Summit substantially. It will be possible to engage people everywhere much more directly and deeply in the process and move them to take action in their own communities and lives. We would suggest that the Summit could generate a billion commitments to a more sustainable future.

We hope the U.S. government will join Brazil and the rest of the developing nations which have endorsed the proposed 2012 Earth Summit. We are eager to work with you and your Administration to make the Summit a success.

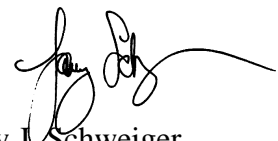
Sincerely,



Frances Beinecke  
President  
Natural Resources Defense  
Council



Carl Pope  
Executive Director  
Sierra Club



Larry J. Schweiger  
President & Chief Executive  
Officer,  
National Wildlife Federation



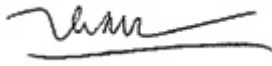
Christopher Flavin  
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Phil Radford  
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Dr. Biliانا Cicin-Sain  
Co-Chair and Head of  
Secretariat, Global Forum on  
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Dr. Christine K. Durbak  
Chair and CEO  
World Information Transfer

cc: The Honorable Hillary Clinton, Secretary of State  
cc: The Honorable Susan Rice, US Ambassador to the United Nations  
cc: The Honorable Steven Chu, Secretary of Energy  
cc: Lisa Jackson, EPA Administrator  
cc: Samantha Power, National Security Council, Multilateral Affairs