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Following is the address by Deputy Secretary-General Louise Fréchette to the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee for the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Bali today, 5 June, 2002:

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First, I would like to thank the Government and citizens of Indonesia and Bali for hosting this United Nations conference with such generosity and graciousness. You have made us feel utterly welcome. We hope to finish our work quickly so that we can enjoy the splendid beauty of this island.

Almost two years ago, at the Millennium Summit, the world's leaders agreed on an ambitious yet achievable agenda for peace and progress in the twenty-first century. They decided, in particular, that the first 15 years of this century should be used for a major onslaught against the terrible poverty that afflicts so many members of the human family. Towards that end, they established a set of specific, time-bound objectives, known to you all as the Millennium Development Goals.

But let us not forget that the Millennium Declaration was not only about lifting people out of poverty, and not only about securing them from violence and armed conflict. Equal footing was given to protecting our common environment and the commitment to "spare no effort to free all humanity ... from the threat of living on a planet irredeemably spoiled by human activities".

Johannesburg is meant to find a path that improves standards of living while protecting the environment, a path that works for all peoples, today and tomorrow. That relationship -- between human society and the natural environment -- is the core concern of Johannesburg, and is what sets Johannesburg apart from other United Nations conferences and summits.

The Secretary-General has proposed five key areas for particular focus as we move ahead: water and sanitation, energy, agriculture, biodiversity, ecosystem management and health. Why these five from among a multitude of worthy possibilities? Because they are widely considered to be the most central to sustainability. Because progress is possible now, with the knowledge and technologies already at our disposal.

I see with pleasure that the five priority areas feature prominently in the plan of implementation. It is important to have firm targets and deadlines, as well as concrete commitments in these areas so as to generate real momentum for action.

But some critical work remains to be done over the next three days. Full agreement has to be reached on the implementation plan before we leave Bali. Only then will we have established a firm foundation for the vital work that remains to be done between Bali and Johannesburg, in particular, with regard to the partnerships linked to the plan of implementation.

The success of Johannesburg will not only be measured by the plan of implementation. Today, you will begin to provide elements for a political declaration. The political declaration will be the primary tool for the heads of State and government to convey to the world their vision for a sustainable world. We need a credible political declaration that commits leaders to act and inspire all actors to recognize their own responsibilities. The political declaration is the place for commitments to action in key areas, global and local, and for providing a sense of the values that underpin the concept of sustainable development and instigate actions.

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It has become a truism that governments cannot "do the job alone", but there is a great deal that they, and only they, can and must accomplish. It is governments that set national policies and priorities. It is governments that establish frameworks of laws and incentives. It is governments that create institutions to provide public services and meet a nation's diverse needs. And it is governments that must deliver on the promises they made throughout the conference cycle of the 1990s, culminating in the Millennium Summit.

In this connection, I want to make a special appeal to your governments and to your parliaments to ratify the treaties that underlie our efforts in the area of sustainable development. We invite you to do so between now and Johannesburg as a concrete, immediate step towards the implementation of Agenda 21.