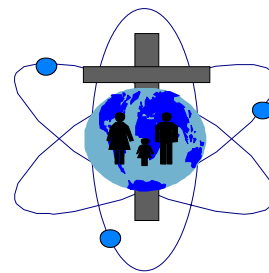


SRT BULLETIN

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Church of Scotland

Jo'burg Summit - A Tale of Two Cities

'The contrast was overpowering: from the luxury hotels & conference facilities at the World Summit on Sustainable Development just to the next valley, to a church in Alexandra township, literally surrounded by a sardine tin mass of tiny shacks, built of any waste materials people can lay their hands on. One walks straight out of the church door into 3 square miles of poverty holding a population the size of Edinburgh. As our World Church of Churches delegation, drawn from churches all over the world, came to worship with local Christians, this tale of two cities reflected the impasse between two world views which underlay much of the Summit.' SRT Director Donald Bruce writes from Johannesburg, as part of Scottish First Minister Jack McConnell's six person delegation representing Scottish civic society, and also working with the WCC team.



One view believes that development means free market economic growth. Creating the conditions and infrastructure to let the private sector flourish will create wealth, consumer goods, and eventually the poor will do better too. And some of the profits can be used to clean up the environment. The other world view sees the local reality of Alexandra and the global damage to the environment, joins hands with the poor and cares for God's creation. It says to the growth model 'your priorities are backwards.'

Negotiations, Visions and Reality

Reality is more complex, but the Jo'burg Summit should have been the vision and goal-setting platform from which governments, business and civil society planned for long term sustainable development. So much that could have been achieved for the poor and the environment, building on the Earth

Summit at Rio 10 years ago, was lost in compromises to the immediate interests of powerful lobbies, especially

the USA. Protracted negotiation over texts produced few challenging targets to match the fine words of Heads of States. As we followed the delegations' wrangling over wording, we sought to make the concerns of the churches known on key issues like international corporate responsibility, increasing renewable energy, removing unfair agricultural and fossil fuel subsidies, and upholding the precautionary principle. Yet my overwhelming sense was that the real action lay elsewhere.

Climbing the Real Summit

The real story of Jo'burg is in thousands of initiatives all over the world, where people cannot wait for treaties, and are just getting on with being imaginative about building a sustainable future. Whether it's simple solar ovens which need no gathered firewood, or a remarkable joint meeting of the business community and Greenpeace to alert the world to climate change, there were examples of hope all around. And the Church has a crucial role. No other organisation has such a web of contacts across the world to make the connections that can bridge rich and poor, need and innovation, North and South, environment and community. In the gospel of Jesus Christ we have the message of changed lives and motivations, vivid in the joy and singing of the 'Alex' church, the groundrules for action, and the vision of God's kingdom to make a difference in the big sticking point - the lack of will to change out of our comfort zones. In the light of Jo'burg's Two Cities, *if* we are prepared to act in caring jointly for God's creation and communities, it would be a witness to the watching world. From the Johannesburg Summit, SRT lays down a challenge to the Kirk.

What churches can do

Eco-Congregation is a UK-wide scheme to enable churches to put their concern for God's creation into practice in their local situation. Launched in Scotland 18 months ago, over 250 churches have now inquired about the programme. They have received the introductory information pack which helps each church examine its ecological footprint and identify what actions it wants to begin with. These can be as small or as ambitious as you like. Each congregation is different so the programme is designed to be flexible. Support is at hand too from SRT's new Assistant Director Victoria Beale and Margaret Warnock of Forth Environmental Link. They are setting up area workshops to help congregations get started, to offer advice, share experience from churches already taking part, and putting them in touch with local support. If you would like a workshop in your area or would like to join the scheme, contact Victoria at SRT. You can make a step to show God's people care for God's world.

WHAT WAS AGREED AT JO'BURG

Governments committed themselves to a programme of action and implementation and a broad political statement. Among the provisions are some good, some poor :

- ◆ Recognising the social and poverty dimensions of sustainable development
- ◆ Global environmental treaties are not merely subservient to World Trade rules.
- ◆ Recognising the mutual and joint roles of states, companies and civil society.
- ◆ Steps towards setting up an international corporate social responsibility system.
- ◆ Actions plans towards sustainable consumption ... but nothing concrete.
- ◆ Halving those suffering hunger by 2015 and encouraging sustainable agriculture
- ◆ Minimising adverse health and environmental effects of chemicals by 2020.
- ◆ Halving the number of people without safe clean water and sanitation by 2015, but a US-forced trade off, in exchange for dropping targets on renewable energy.
- ◆ Only removing sustainability inhibiting fossil fuel subsidies "where appropriate"
- ◆ Significantly reducing rate of biodiversity loss by 2010 but not reversing it
- ◆ Reversing trend in natural resource degradation, but no targets or dates
- ◆ Restore fishstocks urgently, but to levels to produce maximum sustainable yields
- ◆ Removal of the Precautionary Principle regarding biodiversity & other activities
- ◆ **No specific targets** on agriculture, energy, transport, waste or natural resources.

Overall, not as bad as it might have been, but too often too watered down, leaving loopholes everywhere for non-compliance. But the UK offers some signs of hope. While the EU were often disappointing in conceding too much to the US and other groupings the UK played a role in pressing for stronger agreements on a number of issues. UK ministers and negotiators held daily briefings with the UK NGO's which were open, cordial and appreciated on both sides. Jack McConnell's encouraging lead on sustainable development, waste recycling and ambitious renewable energy targets opens scope for some good things in Scotland. SRT will be engaging on these issues and with our fellow civil society actors for a more sustainable Scotland

A Climate for Change

Why don't US Christians lobby Mr Bush to take climate change seriously? What makes European companies like BP and Shell turn increasingly from traditional oil-based strategies to a cleaner future of renewable energy and hydrogen fuels, yet US oil giants remain fossilised in black gold? These were questions posed by several of the world's top climate scientists to leaders from the US evangelical community at the Oxford Climate Forum in July. Organised jointly by the UK John Ray Initiative and the US Au Sable Institute, the forum brought together scientists and Christian leaders on both sides of the Atlantic to examine the evidence for human-induced global warming. SRT helped draft the Oxford Climate Declaration which calls on Christian leadership to inform their churches of the facts and ramifications of climate change, to set an example by actions, and to encourage corporations and Governments to do the same.

SRT Trust & Associates

The SRT Trust exists to raise funds to help support SRT's core work and to expand into major new projects. The SRT Associates scheme enables people to be kept more closely in touch with SRT's ongoing work via regular mailings of our reports, papers, talks, etc. We also want to widen the base of our work, drawing on advice and relevant skills of Associates. To find out more contact the SRT administrator.

SRT ON SCIENCE COMMITTEE

SRT Director Dr Bruce has become a member of the new Scottish Science Advisory Committee. Set up by the Scottish Executive to oversee the future strategy for science in Scotland, it is significant in acknowledging an important role for public values issues. This is most encouraging because last year SRT had criticised the Scottish Science Strategy for focusing too much on science in its role in wealth and job creation and too little on its purpose for bringing benefits to humankind and the environment. Dr Bruce is part of a subgroup which will explore how to improve the relation of science to the wider society in Scotland and the media.

What Next at SRT?

With the appointment of SRT's Assistant Director Victoria Beale in June, we are now looking strategically to SRT's next pieces of work. This autumn will see a new energy study, work on radioactive waste, and the second edition of our acclaimed book on nonhuman GM issues *Engineering Genesis*. This will have new material on GM crop trials and risks, sustainable agriculture and developing country applications like Vitamin A rice. We continue to work on risk, patenting and on technology as a social contract.

New Projects

We plan more information sheets on crucial issues, an expansion of our website, and a new simple booklet on the implications of the Jo'burg Summit, to replace our *Seeing Scotland from the Summit* written after Rio in 1992. We're also starting to look at nanotechnology, waste recycling and wider environmental policy in the wake of Johannesburg. Internationally, we have strategic work on human genetics with the World Council of Churches and the Conference of European Churches, and we continue as webmaster for the European Christian Environment Network. In all this work we are looking to include a more active role for our SRT Associates, to expand the skill base. Do join us!

SRT and Your Needs

SRT is the Kirk's mission to the world of science, technology and environment. It's also an ecumenical resource for all the churches in Scotland, and further afield, to help you know and address the issues raised by today's developments. The SRT Bulletin aims to inform and to provide thought provoking articles for use in parish magazines or elsewhere. We just ask you to acknowledge SRT as the source. Tell us what you find useful!

For More Information ...

Look at our extensive **Worldwide Web pages**. We have **Information Sheets** on cloning, stem cells, GM animals, GM food, GM environmental risk, patenting, environment, Eco-Congregation, energy saving, climate change, etc. Write fax, email or phone for our publications list. Our office in John Knox House has books on a range of subjects to browse. And if you know someone who'd like a copy of this newsletter, let us know!

DEMOCS

How do we have a proper public debate on today's top issues like stem cells, xenotransplantation or genetic selection avoiding being domination by a few vociferous and well-organised groups? It's a major problem for the new mood of social accountability of science. SRT is working with the New Economics Foundation to create a card game called DEMOCS you could play in the pub or at home, examining these big issues without needing a PhD in genetics! Ask SRT to find out more, or to have a go.

SRT is a Church of Scotland project of the Board of National Mission, a member of Action of Churches Together in Scotland, supported by the Scottish Episcopal, United Reformed & United Free Churches. Director: Donald Bruce; Assistant Director: Victoria Beale; Admin: Sheila Mutch

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