

Taking Action at Rio+20

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The [Rio+20 Earth Summit](#) represents a once-in-a-generation opportunity to create a roadmap for the “Future We Want” —the fitting motto of the June Summit. Heads of State, government leaders, non-governmental organisations and the business community in attendance are charged with the task of accelerating the green economy and addressing poverty eradication through sustainable development.

At a time when multilateral negotiations have struggled, Rio needs to produce tangible and viable outcomes with provisions for their implementation and attainment. No more “agreements to agree” at a future date. We can’t afford to wait until Rio+40.

The buildings sector represents a silver (or should I say green) bullet for sustainable development and the green economy. Buildings not only represent one of the largest contributors to greenhouse gas emissions, but additionally offer low-cost opportunities for emissions reduction and resource efficiency. Addressing the design and construction of the built environment can also prevent the “lock-in” of unsustainable future emissions.

Green buildings support high-quality, long-term employment and stimulate local economies. The use of local, sustainable resources have job benefits throughout the supply chain. Green buildings have countless health and social benefits which contribute to improved quality of life for its occupants and neighbors. By 2032, our progress will be all around us since today's buildings and those built moving forward will likely be still be standing. Each building – whether in New York or Cairo or Singapore – will be a testament to our ability to drive solutions that deliver the economic, social and environmental benefits of sustainability.

The [U.S. Green Building Council](#) is working with U.S. leaders and international organizations to advance the agenda of green buildings globally. Our Road to Rio+20 event series in collaboration with UN Environment Programme Regional Office of North America and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development brought together stakeholders from local governments, business and civil society to discuss green buildings and sustainable cities in the context of Rio. The recommendations from participants throughout North America will be compiled in a report to be released on World Environment Day on 05 June. This outcome document is intended to guide international leaders in promoting the sustainability of the built environment.

But we must call upon our leaders to attend Rio and to move toward robust outcomes. While it may seem that Heads of State hold all of the power in international politics, the onus is on each of us to put political pressure on our leaders to act. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon recently said that civil society and the business community hold the power to leave a lasting legacy at Rio+20. We are the ones that vote both by ballot and with our wallets. We need to communicate our position to our leaders and the world. Our future is something in which everyone has a stake.

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