

# THE GREAT BETRAYAL

Why civil society walked out and withdrew consent from WSSD  
by Dr. Vandana Shiva

*[Ed: The great Indian social justice activist, Vandana Shiva, is edging closer and closer to being a Geoist, such is her growing insight into the distinctive rights associated with natural resources. Excerpts from her post-mortem of the farcical Earth Summit conflict sharply with commentaries from mainstream media – unsurprisingly!]*

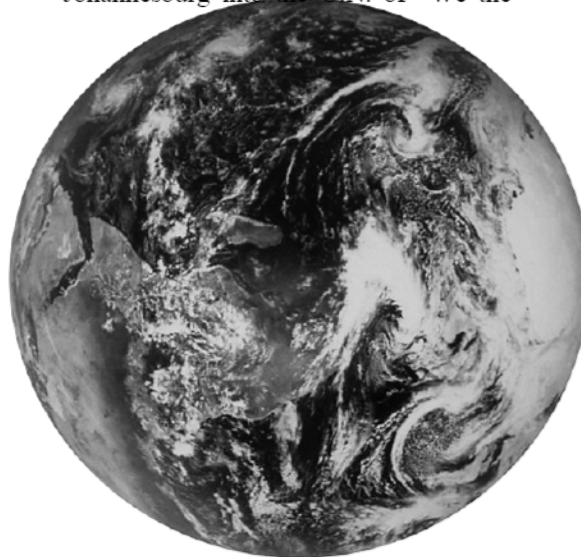
The World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) was organised in Johannesburg from August 26 - September 4, 2002 was supposed to have been the Earth Summit II - ten years after the Earth Summit was organised in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Instead of Rio + 10, WSSD became Doha+10. Ten months ago, the Ministerial Meeting of W.T.O. was organised in Doha to salvage the W.T.O. negotiations for a new enlarged round which had failed in Seattle due to citizen protest and a walk out by smaller countries who had been marginalised and excluded in the negotiations. The implementation document of WSSD mentioned Doha and WTO 46 times at one stage and Rio only once. The draft had been introduced undemocratically by the U.S. and E.U., and with minor modifications was reintroduced by South Africa. There was no rebellion by Governments against the surreptitious substitution of the sustainability agenda of Rio with the commercial and corporate agenda of W.T.O.

While the landless people and the movements against privatisation marched for environmental and resource rights, globalisation pundits kept repeating the mantra that the poor could not afford the "luxury" of their natural capital -- they needed globalisation. Globalisers do not see that globalisation would rob the poor of their resources, make them the property of global corporations who would then sell water and seeds at high cost to the poor thus pushing them deeper into poverty, and over the edge of survival.

During PBS/BBC debate in which I participated, industry spokesmen clearly said that imposing private property rights to

natural resources was their first priority. Globalising the non-sustainable, unethical, inequitable systems of ownership, control and use of natural resources was the main agenda at WSSD. The corporate hijack of the Earth summit was the overall outcome – WSSD had mutated into WSSD.

But the implications go further than the hijack of one summit. These are dangerous trends for democracy. The substitution of multilateral legally binding agreements (Type I outcomes) by so-called Type II outcomes in the form of public private partnerships are reflections of the privatisation of states and privatisation of the U. N. The U. N. of "We the People" was transformed in Johannesburg into the U.N. of "We the



burg into the U.N. of "We the Corporations". It appeared to be an auction house where the Earth herself was being put up for sale.

For us in civil society the earth and one world is not for sale. That is why we withdrew our consent to the outcomes.

Instead of governments committing themselves to conserve water and defend and uphold water rights of all their citizens, they were selling off water in privatisation deals, even though water is not the property of the state, but the com-

mons cared for and shared by communities.

The privatisation of water commons is illegal and illegitimate in common property law, natural law and moral law. This is why there were protests against water privatisation through out WSSD. That is why we withdrew our consent from the process. The police attacked one such protest on 24th Aug with stun bombs, injuring three people. During a T.V. debate, when a person displaced by a dam in Lesotho to bring water to South Africa's industry and towns called money generated by water privatisation "blood money" -- the head of South Africa's water supply said, "I love blood money that creates wealth".

Johannesburg made it clear that the real clash of cultures is between cultures of life and cultures of death. The anti-poverty movement, the justice movement, the sustainability movement, the ecology movement are actually one movement, the movement to defend the resources for sustenance and right to sustenance as a natural right -- a right that is not given by states and cannot be taken away by greedy corporations. Corrupt deals on pieces of paper cannot extinguish that natural right. This is why in Johannesburg the movements had the moral power, not the corporations or governments. The moral degradation of the ruling elites was also evident in the privatisation of life through biotechnology and patents.

Our collective civil society statement issued on September 4, when we disassociated ourselves with deep concern from the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development was simultaneously a declaration of our resolve and commitment: "We celebrate our common resolve to strengthen the diversity of human cultures and the integrity of our Planet Earth. We reaffirm that 'another world is possible' and we shall make it happen."

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