



Basic challenges for humanity and their potential consequences



Population

The Earth's population reached 7 billion people at the beginning of the 21st century, and is expected to level out at between 10 and 11 billion over the next 50 years. Basic challenges will include shortages of drinking water and arable land for food production.



Poverty and inequality

Almost 50 percent of the world's population are living on less than USD 2.5 per day. Because inequality continues to be a serious obstacle to sustainable development, the world community has pledged to bring this percentage down to between 12 and 13 percent, and to reduce the number of people suffering from malnutrition.



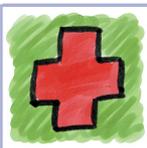
Food and agriculture

The fall in food prices over the past 30 years has perhaps contributed to increased consumption, but arable land is limited in many regions of the world and the creation of new farmland has a destructive effect on remaining ecosystems. In the future, food production should not be increased at the expense of nature. The current pace of biodiversity loss must be significantly slowed in the years to come.



Drinking water

The shortage of drinking water in many regions of the world is a major barrier to sustainable development. It is expected that, at the current rate of development, every second person will suffer from water shortages by the year 2025. In the near future, the world community aspires to halve the number of people without access to clean drinking water and water for basic hygiene.



Human health

Many causes of death in developing countries are preventable. The world community must direct greater human and financial resources in the coming years to the struggle against disease. One immediate task is to reduce the mortality rate among children under five years of age by two-thirds, and the maternal mortality rate by 75 percent.



Energy

Levels of consumption of all forms of energy are continually rising. Improving access to reliable, sustainable and environmentally friendly energy sources and services, as well as creating national programmes for energy efficiency, are vital tasks in the coming 10 to 15 years.



Forests

The world's forests are disappearing mainly due to the expansion of agriculture. In the coming years, forest management and recovery will be of the utmost importance.



Climate change

The world community has emphasised the need to reach an agreement on greenhouse gas emission norms in developed countries, and has declared the following tasks to be imperative in addressing climate change:

- to improve understanding of the concept of sustainable development and to stabilise the relevant institutions at international, regional and national levels; and
- to further endorse the role of civil society and to promote partner initiatives between the private and public sectors.