



Llywodraeth Cymru
Welsh Government

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY THE WELSH GOVERNMENT

TITLE **Visit to Rio+20**

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Development**

I have just returned from a productive visit to the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro (Rio+20) as part of the official UK delegation. The summit brought together representatives from over 100 nations as well as NGOs and businesses all over the world to decide on how to tackle the World's worsening environmental problems.

It is important that, in concluding the Summit, world leaders voted to include the role of regional governments in the final declaration text. The text also includes the strong recognition that much of the work will be led by regions and sub national governments.

My presence there enabled me to represent Wales as a leader in sustainable development, promote the role that we have to play in global negotiations and gain valuable insight and feedback at a world level. Peter Davies, Commissioner for Sustainable Futures, also attended the event and further promoted the work of Wales whilst networking with key figures.

In addressing the many meetings and events being held throughout the Summit, I was able to promote what the Welsh Government is doing to embed sustainable development in everything it does; raise awareness of the important role regional governments play in international commitment to sustainability, and gather views on Wales' plans to introduce a Sustainable Development Bill. I addressed the World Summit of Federated States and Regions hosted by the Governor of Rio State and gained insights into the different approaches to sustainable development in order that we can make our legislation as strong and effective as possible. I also outlined the work on our Wales for Africa programme and the conscious choice of the government and people of Wales to be an outward facing nation.

I addressed meetings of the Climate Group and the network of regional governments for Sustainable Development, two international networks in which Wales plays a key role. I was encouraged by the support for our groundbreaking proposals for Sustainable Development legislation as well as our other measures, such as our energy performance programme, Arbed, which has seen £66 million being invested to boost the green economy and improve the energy efficiency of 7500 homes. This is being supplemented by the recently launched second phase, which will see the Welsh Government investing £45m to reduce fuel bills for 4800 homes in deprived areas of Wales. These are already the building blocks that will see a more sustainable Wales.

I hosted a specific event on our proposed Sustainable Development Bill for representatives of NGOs and civil society to feed in their views. The event was a success with a wide range of organisations represented. I will be reviewing the learning from this event with officials so that the information gathered can be added to our thinking on the bill which will place a duty on the Welsh Government and devolved public bodies to embed sustainable development principles within their strategic decision making, and to establish an independent body to provide an expert source of advice and support .

One of our main challenges is how this legislation and other Welsh Government programmes align with the Rio+20 process - establishing our own Sustainable Development goals in the context of global priorities as well as reflecting our national needs and creating a long term governance framework for sustainable development within the Bill.

I signed two declarations whilst at the summit. The first committing to the Climate Group's 'Clean Revolution and the Green Economy' and the second committing to a 'New Paradigm for Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication' – presented at the States and Regions Alliance General Assembly. Both declarations demonstrate the leading role regional governments can play and I look forward to demonstrating how Wales can play a part in moving forward with both these commitments.

The Rio+20 process was evidence that global negotiations by national governments representing developed, emerging and developing countries may, by their very nature, lag behind the ambition of smaller devolved nations, regions, cities and business. It is clear that smaller countries, like Wales, can show a lead and set examples in how to create sustainable places and practises. In Wales, we now have the opportunity to further demonstrate this by creating our own ground breaking legislation on Sustainable Development.