



# LEAVING A GREENING LEGACY:

Guidelines for event greening



**GREENING**  
the WSSD

# Foreword



In August and September 2002, South Africa hosted the largest United Nations conference ever held on the African continent, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The ten day conference, held in Johannesburg, brought together 22 000 leaders from government, civil society and business to address global economic, social and environmental issues in a sustainable manner. To translate the Summit's global thinking into local action, the South African government, the United Nations Development Programme, the Global Environment Facility, and the World Conservation Union set out to green the WSSD. The "Greening the WSSD" initiative aimed to minimise the negative environmental impact of the WSSD on Johannesburg, while leaving a durable environmental best practice legacy in South Africa and the world at large.

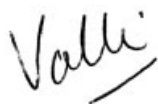
A dedicated Greening Team worked closely with the Summit's organisers to ensure that, as far as possible, Summit operations and logistics reflected environmental best practice. To strengthen the greening legacy, they concentrated their resources on realistic activities with meaningful, high impact outcomes, in the following key areas:

- Procurement;
- Waste management;
- Water conservation;
- Energy efficiency;
- Pollution reduction;
- Transportation;
- The hospitality industry;
- Awareness and education; and
- Monitoring and evaluation.

Although it was not possible to achieve a totally green Summit, the Greening the WSSD initiative enhanced South Africa's capacity to implement environmental best practice. It left a legacy of improved environmental infrastructure and more rigorous environmental policies. It also raised public awareness about the WSSD and environmental best practice; and set a precedent for hosting large-scale meetings and conventions in South Africa and abroad.

This handbook was developed to enable event organisers to build on the Greening the WSSD precedent. It is based on the lessons learned from the Greening the WSSD experience, as well as international greening practices. The handbook consists of a set of generic guidelines for greening events, complemented by practical tips and examples of greening activities. Several of the successes of the Greening the WSSD initiative are highlighted throughout the handbook.

Under the pioneering leadership of Mohamed El-Ashry (CEO: GEF), Mary Metcalfe (Gauteng MEC: DACEL), John Ohiorhenuan (Resident Representative: UNDP South Africa), and Yolanda Kakabadse (President: IUCN), the Greening the WSSD Team has developed a series of greening activities and products that leave a positive legacy of environmental best practice. The strength of this handbook and all other Greening the WSSD legacies, however, depends on your willingness to participate in them and to strengthen your relationship with the environment. It is now up to you to try something new; to adopt the greening principles; to implement the greening activities; and to motivate others to do the same.



HE MR MOHAMMED VALLI MOOSA  
Chair

11th Session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development



# Acknowledgements

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Finally, we thank the Greening the WSSD Team for its dedication to greening the World Summit on Sustainable Development and eagerness to share its experience with future event greeners.

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# Section I: Introduction

## 1.1 Background

Over 9 000 international meetings are held globally each year, approximately 20% of which involve over 1 000 participants.<sup>1</sup> Numerous large domestic meetings are also convened annually. In 2001, 11 800 major conventions with a total of 12,5 million attendees were hosted in the United States alone.<sup>2</sup> Construction and use of facilities, travel and accommodation, and operations for these events have enormous impact on the host region. Some of this impact is positive. The 2002 United Nations World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg generated R2,9 billion (US \$270 million) for the South African economy; led to new business sales worth R9 billion (US \$837 million), and created over 19 000 jobs for South African citizens. However, these economic benefits are often accompanied by negative environmental impact, including excess strain on local resources, disruption of daily activities, and increased waste and pollution. The WSSD, for example, generated 322,59 tonnes of waste and 136 000 tonnes of carbon emissions. This equates to approximately half of the waste collected each month from the Johannesburg Inner City and half of South Africa's daily fossil fuel related carbon emissions.<sup>3</sup> Clearly the negative consequences of hosting large events can contribute to the continued degradation of local and global environments and may lead to hostility among the local population and event organisers and participants.

An event's environmental impact can be minimised, and even avoided. As a result of the Greening the WSSD initiative, the recycling rate at the Summit was 27%, which is 22% higher than the average recycling rate for South Africa's Gauteng Province (5%). In addition, 10% of the Summit-related carbon emissions were offset through investment in carbon-reducing projects. This handbook provides event organisers with a set of guidelines on greening large-scale events, or hosting them in an environmentally responsible manner. It is based on the lessons learned from the greening of the WSSD, and international environmental best practice, and has been reviewed by environmental, sustainable development and event experts.



Erik Förster



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Large-scale events often involve several productions and attract key world leaders. Above: WSSD Welcome Ceremony. Below: South African President Thabo Mbeki at the WSSD.

Although the guidelines were drawn primarily from an event with environmental content, the scope of this handbook goes beyond environmental events. It is aimed at hosts and organisers of all large-scale events, from meetings and conferences to exhibitions, fairs, functions, sporting and cultural events, and mega-events like the WSSD. Relevant events may involve the use or modification of existing venues or the construction of permanent and/or temporary structures. Participation may be limited to targeted specialists or open to the public. All events include a variety of organisational and support services, such as accreditation, transportation, accommodation, catering, communication, merchandising, medical and security services, and waste management, each of which can be greened.<sup>4</sup>

Organisations and individuals may also find value in the guidelines, as the basic principles of greening and key greening practices can be applied to any decision or activity at any scale. Through event greening, this handbook ultimately seeks to influence individual and collective behaviour to leave a greening legacy of environmental best practice.

**Greening  
means making  
environmentally  
responsible  
decisions and  
turning them  
into actions**

## 1.2 User's Guide

This handbook is divided into three sections. Section I provides the information necessary to convince others that your event should be greened. It briefly defines greening and the principles behind greening, and outlines why event greening is beneficial to both event organisers and host communities.

Section II explains how to green events. It begins with a discussion on defining greening strategies to suit particular contexts. Generic guidelines on event greening follow, accompanied by practical tips and examples of greening activities. The guidelines consist of four complementary sub-sections, each of which can be tailored to any event. These are: management principles for event greening; greening practices; areas for event greening; and maximising impact through awareness raising and monitoring and evaluation.



All four sub-sections provide valuable insight into defining and improving a greening initiative and should be considered when greening your event. The guidelines are, however, suggestions and should be adapted to suite your particular event. While the general greening principles and practices are universal for all events, areas to be greened and specific greening activities will vary according to the nature of your event and the context in which it is held. It is up to you to determine which areas of event operations can be most effectively greened and define a greening strategy accordingly. The aim is not necessarily to host a totally green event, but rather to use resources optimally to reduce the environmental impact on the host region and leave a positive legacy of environmental best practice.

Section III concludes with a summary of the major points to consider when greening an event. A quick reference greening checklist and useful resources for event greening are included in Annexes A and B to assist you in planning your greening initiative. Annex C provides a glossary of terms.

### 1.3 What is Greening?

Greening means much more than planting trees in your backyard or expanding the size of your local park. It means making environmentally responsible decisions and turning them into actions.

Environmentally responsible decisions and actions reduce the negative impact on the environment by conserving resources, using resources efficiently, and minimising pollution. They also improve human well being by creating social and economic environments that give people choices. As a greater number of people feel the environmental, social and economic benefits of greening, they will exercise their choice in a more environmentally responsible manner.

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