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Commitments and Principles to Guide Public Policy Decision-Making

In 1993, the newly formed Waitakere City - the eco city - adopted the Principles of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development and Agenda 21 as guiding documents in its quest to build a city with a strong economy, healthy communities, cultural richness, and environmental quality that would see it endure and surmount the troubles of the 21st Century. Both these documents were adopted by governments at the UN Convention on Environment and Development ("The Earth Summit") held in Rio de Janeiro in June 1992.

Agenda 21 and the Principles have served the city well for over a decade of sustainable development achievement. They underpinned the Council's "Greenprint" for sustainable, dynamic, just development. The elements of a 21st century sustainable city are in place.

In looking into the long term future, the Council has engaged with its communities to gauge their aspirations and expectations for the shape and character of the city. The search for principled, sustainable development continues to be a desired outcome.

The Council is required to plan its activities at least ten years ahead. In thinking about the future of the city, the Council has agreed to exercise that duty within a century-long perspective (looking both forward and back) in order to anticipate and prepare for major environmental, social and economic changes that might dramatically advantage or disadvantage the city. We would seek to avoid development that might be undermined, destroyed or made irrelevant by those changes. The Council has a particular leadership role in providing much of the enduring infrastructural framework for a future society, and for securing the environmental needs of present and future generations. But the ultimate purpose of all council-actions is to give practical effect to the first Rio Principle:

Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development.

They are entitled to a healthy productive life in harmony with nature.

In approaching its long term planning for the city the Council has agreed to evaluate actions and investments against their potential contribution to the **resilience, liveability and sustainability of the city**. As a high level guide, the Council, in December 2005, recommitted to the Principles of the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, it made twelve public commitments that give further effect to the notion of a "Sustainable City", and it adopted ten principles for sustainable development policy development and decision-making.

This package of commitments and principles are consistent and reinforcing in their approach. Their application will lead to more integrated policy development across social, economic, environmental and cultural spheres. A single-issue ap-

proach to decision-making is unlikely to make the gains the Council and community are looking for.

The commitments and principles are not new, but they have a fresh relevance to Waitakere as it moves from its eco-city establishment phase to its long term development phase. The twelve commitments are drawn from the 2004 Aalborg Commitments adopted at the Fourth European Conference on Sustainable Cities and Towns, and subsequently adopted by over 110 European local governments. The 10 Principles are drawn from the 2003 Sustainable Development Programme of Action for New Zealand, and were formally adopted by Cabinet in December 2002. The UNCED Agenda 21 and the Rio Declaration were adopted in 1992, and reaffirmed at the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002.

The Waitakere City Council Commitments and Principles to guide public policy decision-making are set out as follows.

We Commit to

- **Governance** - We are committed to energising our decision-making processes through increased participatory democracy
- **Local Management Towards Sustainability** – We are committed to implementing effective management cycles, from formulation through implementation to evaluation
- **Natural Common Goods** – We are committed to fully assuming our responsibility to protect, to preserve, and to ensure equitable access to natural common goods
- **Responsible Consumption and Lifestyle Choices** – We are committed to adopting and facilitating the prudent and efficient use of resources and to encouraging the sustainable consumption and production
- **Planning and Design** – We are committed to a strategic role for urban planning and design in addressing environmental, social, economic, health and cultural issues for the benefit of all
- **Better Mobility, Less traffic** – We recognise the interdependence of transport, health and environment and are committed to strongly promoting sustainable mobility choices
- **Local Action for Health** – We are committed to protecting and promoting health and wellbeing of our citizens
- **Vibrant and Sustainable Local Economy** – We are committed to creating and ensuring a vibrant local economy that gives access to employment without damaging the environment
- **Social Equity and Justice** – We are committed to securing inclusive and supportive communities

- **Local to Global** – We are committed to assuming our global responsibility for peace, justice, equity, sustainable development and climate protection
- **City and Region** – We are committed to being an effective partner in the sustainable development of the Auckland Region
- **Financial Sustainability** – We commit to prudent financial management to support the long term sustainable development of the city

We Commit to Principles for Policy-making and Decision-making

Waitakere City Council recognises that its policies and decisions should ensure the wellbeing of current and future generations. It will take account of the economic, social, environmental and cultural consequences of its decisions by:

1. Considering the long-term implications of decisions
2. Seeking innovative solutions that are mutually reinforcing, rather than accepting that gain in one area will necessarily be achieved at the expense of another
3. Using the best information available to support decision making
4. Addressing risks and uncertainty when making choices and taking a precautionary approach when making decisions that may cause serious or irreversible damage
5. Working in partnership with local government, central government, and other sectors and encouraging transparent and participatory processes
6. Considering the implications of decisions from a global as well as a New Zealand perspective
7. Decoupling economic growth from pressures on the environment
8. Respecting environmental limits, protecting ecosystems and promoting the integrated management of land, water and living resources
9. Working in partnership with appropriate Maori authorities to empower Maori in development decisions that affect them
10. Respecting human rights, the rule of law and cultural diversity

We Commit to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development

Principle 1

Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature.

Principle 2

States have, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and the principles of international law, the sovereign right to exploit their own resources pursuant

to their own environmental and developmental policies, and the responsibility to ensure that activities within their jurisdiction or control do not cause damage to the environment of other States or of areas beyond the limits of national jurisdiction.

Principle 3

The right to development must be fulfilled so as to equitably meet developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations.

Principle 4

In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it.

Principle 5

All States and all people shall co-operate in the essential task of eradicating poverty as an indispensable requirement for sustainable development, in order to decrease the disparities in standards of living and better meet the needs of the majority of the people of the world.

Principle 6

The special situation and needs of developing countries, particularly the least developed and those most environmentally vulnerable, shall be given special priority. International actions in the field of environment and development should also address the interests and needs of all countries.

Principle 7

States shall co-operate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command.

Principle 8

To achieve sustainable development and a higher quality of life for all people, States should reduce and eliminate unsustainable patterns of production and consumption and promote appropriate demographic policies.

Principle 9

States should co-operate to strengthen endogenous capacity-building for sustainable development by improving scientific understanding through exchanges of scientific and technological knowledge, and by enhancing the development,

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adaptation, diffusion and transfer of technologies, including new and innovative technologies.

Principle 10

Environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level. At the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including information on hazardous materials and activities in their communities, and the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.

Principle 11

States shall enact effective environmental legislation. Environmental standards, management objectives and priorities should reflect the environmental and developmental context to which they apply. Standards applied by some countries may be inappropriate and of unwarranted economic and social cost to other countries, in particular developing countries.

Principle 12

States should co-operate to promote a supportive and open international economic system that would lead to economic growth and sustainable development in all countries, to better address the problems of environmental degradation. Trade policy measures for environmental purposes should not constitute a means of arbitrary or unjustifiable discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade. Unilateral actions to deal with environmental challenges outside the jurisdiction of the importing country should be avoided. Environmental measures addressing transboundary or global environmental problems should, as far as possible, be based on an international consensus.

Principle 13

States shall develop national law regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage. States shall also co-operate in an expeditious and more determined manner to develop further international law regarding liability and compensation for adverse effects of environmental damage caused by activities within their jurisdiction or control to areas beyond their jurisdiction.

Principle 14

States should effectively co-operate to discourage or prevent the relocation and transfer to other States of any activities and substances that cause severe environmental degradation or are found to be harmful to human health.

Principle 15

In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach shall be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.

Principle 16

National authorities should endeavour to promote the internalisation of environmental costs and the use of economic instruments, taking into account the approach that the polluter should, in principle, bear the cost of pollution, with due regard to the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.

Principle 17

Environmental impact assessment, as a national instrument, shall be undertaken for proposed activities that are likely to have a significant adverse impact on the environment and are subject to a decision of a competent national authority.

Principle 18

States shall immediately notify other States of any natural disasters or other emergencies that are likely to produce sudden harmful effects on the environment of those States. Every effort shall be made by the international community to help States so afflicted.

Principle 19

States shall provide prior and timely notification and relevant information to potentially affected States on activities that may have a significant adverse transboundary environmental effect and shall consult with those States at an early stage and in good faith.

Principle 20

Women have a vital role in environmental management and development. Their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.

Principle 21

The creativity, ideals and courage of the youth of the world should be mobilised to forge a global partnership in order to achieve sustainable development and ensure a better future for all.

Principle 22

Indigenous people and their communities and other local communities have a vital role in environmental management and development because of their knowledge

and traditional practices. States should recognise and duly support their identity, culture and interests and enable their effective participation in the achievement of sustainable development.

Principle 23

The environment and natural resources of people under oppression, domination and occupation shall be protected.

Principle 24

Warfare is inherently destructive of sustainable development. States shall therefore respect international law providing protection for the environment in times of armed conflict and co-operate in its further development, as necessary.

Principle 25

Peace, development and environmental protection are interdependent and indivisible.

Principle 26

States shall resolve all their environmental disputes peacefully and by appropriate means in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations.

Principle 27

States and people shall cooperate in good faith and in a spirit of partnership in the fulfilment of the principles embodied in this Declaration and in the further development of international law in the field of sustainable development.

We Commit to Agenda 21

Agenda 21

Agenda 21 explains that population, consumption and technology are the primary driving forces of environmental change. It lays out what needs to be done to reduce wasteful and inefficient consumption patterns in some parts of the world while encouraging increased but sustainable development in others. It offers policies and programmes to achieve a sustainable balance between consumption, population and the Earth's life-supporting capacity. It describes some of technologies and techniques that need to be developed to provide for human needs while carefully managing natural resources.

Agenda 21 provides options for combating degradation of the land, air and water, conserving forests and the diversity of species of life. It deals with poverty and excessive consumption, health and education, cities and farmers. There are roles for everyone: governments, business people, trade unions, scientists, teachers, indigenous people, women, youth and children. Agenda 21 does not shun busi-

ness. It says that sustainable development is the way to reverse both poverty and environmental destruction.

We currently gauge the success of economic development mainly by the amount of money it produces. Accounting systems that measure the wealth of nations also need to count the full value of natural resources and the full cost of environmental degradation. The polluter should, in principle, bear the costs of pollution. To reduce the risk of causing damage, environmental assessment should be carried out before starting projects that carry the risk of adverse impacts. Governments should reduce or eliminate subsidies that are not consistent with sustainable development.

A major theme of Agenda 21 is the need to eradicate poverty by giving poor people more access to the resources they need to live sustainably. By adopting Agenda 21, industrialised countries recognised that they have a greater role in cleaning up the environment than poor nations, who produce relatively less pollution. The richer nations also promised more funding to help other nations develop in ways that have lower environmental impacts. Beyond funding, nations need help in building the expertise—the capacity—to plan and carry out sustainable development decisions. This will require the transfer of information and skills.

Agenda 21 calls on governments to adopt national strategies for sustainable development. These should be developed with wide participation, including non-government organisations and the public. Agenda 21 puts most of the responsibility for leading change on national governments, but says they need to work in a broad series of partnerships with international organisations, business, regional, state, provincial and local governments, non-governmental and citizens' groups. As Agenda 21 says, only a global partnership will ensure that all nations will have a safer and more prosperous future.

Chapter 1: preamble

Section One: Social and Economic Dimensions

Chapter 2: International Co-operation

Chapter 3: Combating Poverty

Chapter 4: Changing Consumption Patterns

Chapter 5: Population and Sustainable Development

Chapter 6: Protecting and Promoting Human Health

Chapter 7: Sustainable Human Settlements

Chapter 8: Making Decisions for Sustainable Development

Section Two: Conservation and Management of Resources

Chapter 9: Protecting the Atmosphere

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- Chapter 11: Combating Deforestation
- Chapter 12: Combating Desertification and Drought
- Chapter 13: Sustainable Mountain Development
- Chapter 14: Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development
- Chapter 15: Conservation of Biological Diversity
- Chapter 16: Environmentally Sound Management of Biotechnology
- Chapter 17: Protecting and Managing the Oceans
- Chapter 18: Protecting and Managing Fresh Water
- Chapter 19: Safer Use of Toxic Chemicals
- Chapter 20: Managing Hazardous Wastes
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Section Three: Strengthening the Role of Major Groups

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- Chapter 25: Children and Youth in Sustainable Development
- Chapter 26: Strengthening the Role of Indigenous People
- Chapter 27: Partnerships with NGOs
- Chapter 28: Local Authorities
- Chapter 29: Workers and Trade Unions
- Chapter 30: Business and Industry
- Chapter 31: Scientists and Technologists

Section Four: Means of Implementation

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- Chapter 33: Financing Sustainable Development
- Chapter 34: Technology Transfer
- Chapter 35: Science for Sustainable Development
- Chapter 36: Education, Training and Public Awareness
- Chapter 37: Creating the Capacity for Sustainable Development