

## FACT SHEET #2: WHAT IS SUSTAINABILITY?

*Sustainability* is usually defined as a way of life which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

*Sustainability* is a concept that includes several important ideas:

- *Renewability* – relying mainly on renewable resources including renewable energy, and using them more slowly than they can be replenished so that we are not depleting them;
- *Continuous cycles* – using materials and energy, not in a *linear* form of extraction, production, processing, use, consumption and waste but in *cycles* of reuse and recycling, so that the final end products of goods and wastes are returned to the front end of the production process to repeat the cycle as many times as possible;
- *Efficiency* – using the minimum of resources and energy to produce the goods and services we need with the minimum of waste. This in turn implies;
- *Durability* – goods and services last as long as possible, to be replaced as infrequently as possible, again with minimum of waste; We pursue these ideas and goals, without exceeding;
- *Ecological limits* and the carrying capacity of the earth – the ability of the planet to support all living things; including humanity.

When we achieve sustainability, we *avoid* irreversible ecological breakdown; the chronic disruption of nature, the failure of human health and the decrease in the capacity of the earth to support life. Sustainability is, above all, essential for human life and livelihood.

*Principles of sustainability:*

- value and protect other species, biodiversity and ecosystem vitality;
- focus on the quality of life, not the “standard of living”;
- live within the limits of natural systems;
- ensure just use and distribution of resources; and
- create the conditions for broad participation by a knowledgeable workforce and the public.