

Statement at the Informal Meeting of the CPR on behalf of the Regional Representatives

Annual consultations bring civil society representatives from around each of the six regions--Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and West Asia--to in-person meetings, gathering members of civil society from all major groups and different countries. At these meetings, representatives discuss the issues that will be addressed by the GC/GMEF-UNEA, as well as others that are relevant to each regional debate. The outcomes of the Regional Consultation Meetings are compiled into statements that are continually revised as the parallel processes within UNEP progress. Additionally, representatives are nominated and two are elected for each region. They take the outcomes from the regions to the global consultative processes.

The model plays a particularly important role in ensuring “active participation of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries”, a concern highlighted by the member states at the GC1. Regional representation exactly enables such a balanced approach. Participation of stakeholders at this level is particularly important as the reality experienced by civil society differs greatly among the regions. The regional consultations held during the past years have highlighted the different sets of priorities put forward in these regional contexts. A strengthened participation of stakeholders at the regional level will better equip UNEP to address more adequately the priorities of the people that it seeks to serve.

Strengthening participation at the regional level is also particularly important as the Rio+20 outcome called UNEP to strengthen its regional presence and its support for the implementation of national policies. The regional dimension of UNEP’s policy cycle allows for a diverse group of organizations in a wide range of countries -developing and developed- to contribute to the decision making process of those policies and therefore to be in a better position to support their implementation at the national level. Regional stakeholders engagement also contribute to increase inclusivity within the major groups model. Beyond the 9 major groups currently represented at the global level, participation at the regional level frequently includes additional constituencies such as large faith-based organizations and educational organizations.

In years past, Regional Representatives played a comparable role to the Major Groups within UNEP stakeholder participation. Today, however, Regional Representatives do not have the same opportunities for participation as the Major Groups. Even though the first Guidelines ruling civil society participation granted the same right for Major Groups and Regional Representatives, a subsequent review process gave the Regional Representatives an observer status within the Major Groups Facilitating Committee. Therefore the diverse voices of the regions have been encountering barriers to reach the global debate. Additionally, the global dialogues are finding obstacles to reach civil society organizations at the regional and national levels.

Accreditation at the global level is considered a barrier for some organizations. Regional consultations allow for smaller, local civil society organizations to participate in UNEP activities. We recommend reviewing the requirements for accreditation within UNEP and

encouraging the Secretariat to continue engaging non-accredited organizations in the consultation process.

In the Asia-Pacific region, for example, representatives for Major Groups such as Farmers & Fisherfolk or Indigenous Peoples do not have the resources for formal incorporation. Yet they are effective in voicing the issues that affect many thousands of people and in implementation of projects that protect human health and the environment while at the same time promoting sustainable development. And, in Africa, the effort of speaking with one voice on the issues affecting the region informed by the realities of the local communities requires the need for more local and indigenous organisations to be accredited. In West Asia and the Latin America and the Caribbean region, the language and cultural barrier pose a significant obstacle for many organizations. Many of them, which cannot participate in a global negotiation, consider the Regional Consultation Meetings as a means to channel their concerns into UNEP's policy cycle.

As identified by the unique barriers to civil society participation in regions, it is important that the emphasis on regional representation remain, and that the role of Regional Representatives is strengthened. Regional Representatives, in addition to sector representatives in the form of Major Groups, provide a vital tool for civil society participation in intergovernmental processes. For example, a strength of the regional model, is that the Regional Representatives have a role in advancing sharing civil society interests, based on an agreed agenda, with national governments and member states. The presence at the UNEA of regional representatives should be used to further assist member states when meeting in a regional setting - for instance Regional Representative should have the opportunity to participate prior to or during the regional consultations with the ED held on the day before the start of the UNEA.

While we understand that finances are constrained, we would like to emphasize the importance for additional resources for regional participation in UNEP meetings. It is essential to move forward a Major Groups and Regional Representatives Engagement Policy and, in doing so, to take into account the contributions made thus far to the review process of the Guidelines for Participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in Policy Design at UNEP. We must reiterate regional representatives —elected democratically in the framework of the UNEP policy-making cycle— should have the same status as the representatives of the major groups on the Major Groups Facilitating Committee (MGFC).