

**The new UNEP**  
**A timely, environmentally sound and**  
**necessary leap into the future**

**The Geneva report: By Jan-Gustav Strandenaes**  
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# Paragraph 16 of the Malmoe Declaration states that:

- ◎ “The role of civil society at all levels should be strengthened through freedom of access to environmental information to all, broad participation in environmental decision-making, as well as access to justice on environmental issues. Governments should promote conditions to facilitate the ability of all parts of society to have a voice and to play an active role in creating a sustainable future”.

Extracts from the Geneva report  
– 6 chapters with conclusions

**From a two day workshop with 22 experts  
speaking on behalf of experience,  
creativity a deep concern for the  
environment, good governance and UNEP**

**... on entry points for  
participation**

# Operationalising the right to full participation:

- Access to all meetings / processes / bodies (including through the final stages of decision-making) at all levels.
- Speaking rights in all meetings - have the same opportunities as governments to express views and opinions
- Document submission -  
Equivalent to Member States

- ◎ **Participation in the planning/agenda setting process,** through (i) intersessional mechanisms/systems, and (ii) in expert/specialised committees, bureaus or other organs;
- ◎ **Timely access to all documents** including draft negotiated texts.

# Value added to the multilateral system through enhanced participation

- ◎ Increasing UNEP's relevance, authority, credibility, legitimacy and effectiveness;
- ◎ Increase the quality of UNEP's decision-making
- ◎ Bringing the organisation closer to the needs of people's and communities;
- ◎ Linking international public discourse to national discourse;
- ◎ Increasing the impacts of UNEP's decisions on the ground, through increasing the sentiment of ownership, accountability at the national level, augmenting the interest to promote political will in all matters related to UNEP's mandate;
- ◎ Upgrading the focus on and protection of the environment including human health.

**... on new options for  
engagement**



# **New engagement: A global meeting on the “State of the World Environment”**

- ◎ “One idea that was explored by the meeting was that UNEP would organise a tri-annual conference on the “State of the World Environment” back-to-back to the GC. Such a meeting could outline environmental trends, identify emerging issues, identify major environmental challenges, etc.” from the report
- ◎ developed with full involvement of major groups and stakeholders in its design, with their full participation

# **... on strengthening participation mechanisms**

## ***Value added of a strengthened facilitation function of major groups, civil society and stakeholders***

- ◎ “With an emerging organisational system pointing to 2022 and beyond, integrating major groups, civil society and relevant stakeholders and strengthening their position in the system would add value and credibility to UNEP” (from the report)
- ◎ A number of explicit points outline their value added

# Strengthened facilitation of civil society by civil society will:

- ⦿ Create opportunities to be involved in implementation;
- ⦿ Result in greater outreach and inclusiveness;
- ⦿ Involve people/networks with expertise, as well as members of civil society that do not belong to a major group;
- ⦿ Improve the interface between work programmes, decisions and political will;
- ⦿ increase the credibility and delivery of facilitation
- ⦿ Contribute to ensuring adequate resources for the coordinating function;
- ⦿ Bring clarity regarding obligations of Major Group members and a related accountability mechanism.

# ***Upholding the Major Groups and stakeholders system at global and regional level***

- ◎ “Utilizing a major groups approach as outlined in Agenda 21 (UNCED 1992) and further elaborated and developed in the Rio plus 20 Process has advantages and should be pursued,”  
from the report
- ◎ However, some expressed concern that elements of civil society may be unrepresented and should be addressed in additional mechanisms, as should the interest in including regional perspectives.”

# The concept of the nine major groups

- ◎ Are not meant to be gatekeepers
- ◎ Are not meant to exclude any non state actors or stakeholders
- ◎ Is a tool meant to make our voice legitimate by bringing different voices into the discussion
- ◎ Is a tool meant to help bring about the biggest diversity possible at the moment with respect to the theme being dealt with

# *Proposed new mechanisms*

- ◎ With UNEPs unique regional system – six regions as opposed to the UNs five economic commissions, and with each of the six regions having a vibrant civil society constituency - it has always been a challenge to integrate all stakeholders with all six regions
- ◎ A new mechanism was outlined and recommended aimed at increasing transparency, accountability, participation and efficiency

**... on transparency**



# Transparency

- ◎ “Transparency was considered essential to enable meaningful participation. A transparency policy is not just adopted to give access to documents but to enable means of accountability” (from the report.)
- ◎ **Public disclosure or Access to information policy is needed**
- ◎ **Adoption of a UNEP Public Disclosure or Access to Information Policy is needed**

# The main elements or scope of an access to information policy in UNEP should include:

- ⊙ Standardise practice for release and embargo of documents and receiving requests.
- ⊙ All information is accessible except that which is covered by limited expressly listed exemptions (with exceptions to be interpreted in a restrictive manner)
- ⊙ Time limits;
- ⊙ Proactive disclosure;
- ⊙ Provisions on requests for information (procedures);
- ⊙ An Independent appeals committee or board;
- ⊙ Provisions to ensure that information is made affordable and waivers for those who cannot afford the cost;
- ⊙ Measurements for implementation and impact;
- ⊙ Processes to address requests in different languages.

# Principle of non-regression

- ◎ On internationally agreed principles
- ◎ On entry and participation practices, formal or informal
- ◎ On systematic participation (ref good/best practices)
- ◎ Diversity of views
- ◎ Open access, transparency and accountability
- ◎ All this in harmony with values expressed in the Rio Outcome Document

# From the Survey Report on Access to information

- ◎ “In terms of access to information, the survey shows the imperativeness of providing easily accessible, relevant, accurate and timely information ...
- ◎ Despite overall satisfaction, recommendations were made to enhance MGS access to information;”

**... on modern technology, resources  
and an ombuds-function**

# Better Use of Modern Information Technology

- ◎ Webinars, Using telephone systems in global dialogues,
- ◎ Forecasting surveys: to engage civil society /the public and use their input in policy development.
- ◎ Crowd sourcing and mobile phones: The EEA Eye on the Earth, UNEP Live. Using mobile technology on the environment to receive citizens alert is another possibility.
- ◎ The Aarhus Convention's Clearing-house Mechanism: a tool to improve access to information.
- ◎ Mapping information and using info graphics: the GRID system in UNEP.
- ◎ Streaming meetings from UNEP
- ◎ UNEP to streamline and consolidate multiple websites ; have portals to allow access to its information.

# Establishing a mechanism/function to ensure full implementation of participation rights

Coverage: participation and transparency

Scope: UNEP focus, not Member States

- ◎ A number of essential ombuds-functions were identified such as
  - > Ensuring access rights are fully implemented
  - > Involving independence, integrity (drawing, inter alia, from the experience of the World Bank Inspection Panel)
  - > Compiling information
  - > Monitoring and improvement on a continuous basis
  - > Identifying a contact/focal point at a relevant level in UNEP

# Resources – nothing happens without them

- ⊙ A mechanism developed to allow for a fixed percentage of the core budget be allocated to support enhanced participation in a new UNEP. (Ref The International Labour Organization (ILO))
- ⊙ Adequate resources for UNEP at Headquarters and in regions;
- ⊙ Adequate funding for the MGFC and its activities;
- ⊙ Travel, and DSA for regional meetings, governing bodies, intersessionals, committees; and
- ⊙ Coordination – telecommunications, some financial compensation for work performed to promote the work of UNEP including their members, the governments.



# Finally -

- ◎ **“We need new mechanisms to ensure accountability. Where there is accountability, we will progress; where there is none, we will underperform.”**
- ◎ Former Secretary General Kofi Annan in “In Larger Freedom” (A/59/2005)