

Asia-Pacific Major Groups and Stakeholders Regional Consultation Meeting

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

17 – 18 September 2013

84 participants from 23 countries in Asia and the Pacific attended the Asia-Pacific Major Groups and Stakeholders Regional Consultation Meeting organized by UNEP, the Asian Development Bank (ADB), Satagoeri Project and Ecomom Korea and hosted by the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia. The meeting was held at the Imperial Garden & Villa Hotel, from 17-18 September 2013. The participants endorsed the following recommendations as necessary steps towards achieving environmental sustainability.

The environment is the foundation of all human activity and is the cornerstone for poverty alleviation. The key environmental challenges facing the Asia-Pacific region are access and control over natural resources, and the role of environmental sustainability as key elements to realize universal social protection, decent work and living wages and to achieve peace and security. Achieving sustainable consumption and production is also a critical issue of our time. The significant influence of corporations over countries in Asia-Pacific in shaping economic policies is preventing the realization of environmental and social objectives. We need to challenge the development paradigm that focuses only on economic growth while undermining human development and environmental sustainability.

The new development must be based on the principle of non-regression, embrace a holistic, rights-based approach, and ensure that the human rights principles of equality, equity, justice – including gender equality and gender justice – non-discrimination, inclusive participation and decision making underpin its policies and practices and respect international human rights instruments such as United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Nationalities (UNDRIP), ILO C N. 169 including the right to development.

Environment in the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

The approach to the post-2015 development agenda and SDGs must create a constructive path to addressing environmental justice. We recommend that:

- The SDGs adopt a rights-based approach and ecosystem based approach to realize a transformative development agenda;
- The new SDGs should include substantive targets and indicators to:
 - Realize clean air and equitable access to clean water, including safe drinking water;
 - Support sustainable cities and settlements;
 - Support non-toxic regions;
 - Ensure progress towards biodiversity conservation, access to and equitable sharing of benefits arising from sustainable use;
 - Mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change with the holistic approach;
 - Move towards energy efficiency and truly renewable energy;
 - Protect, rehabilitate, conserve and develop natural resources (air, water bodies, oceans, land and forest management).

- There is a comprehensive global mechanism for regulating transnational corporations' activities in undermining sustainable development and national sovereignty and holding them accountable;
- Means of implementation (finance, technology and capacity-building) must be addressed in every goal and should be translated to the grassroots level while recognizing that governance is a necessary enabler for implementation;
- Develop better qualitative and quantitative time-bound indicators for measuring social environment impacts and including distributional aspects;
- Recognize transboundary environmental and social impacts of large-scale infrastructure projects, monoculture plantations, technological interventions, etc. and the need to adapt preventative and/ or mitigation measures.

Role of Major Groups and Stakeholder Mechanisms: Civil society has an important role to play in setting development policy which is rooted in their close connection to affected communities. Asia-Pacific civil society input can be facilitated by improving regional engagement in the global processes by:

- Increased support from UNEP to enable more effective civil society engagement in processes;
- Creating a regional Major Group Facilitation Mechanism which would be guided by 11 principles on Stakeholders participation in UNEP that will revisit the current Regional Major Group structure with a Committee of the 9 Major Group Representatives from the region, with the role of establishing thematic working groups based on the agenda of the UN Environment Assembly;
- Ensure there is greater legitimacy and mandate of the Major Groups by encouraging broader participation of local and national groups especially from marginalized communities and by engaging in consultation with constituencies and building their capacity to engage;
- Bring the Asia-Pacific regional positions beyond UNEP meetings to all relevant regional and global meetings to enhance coherence and congruence of messages;
- Ensure regular and substantive feedback and follow ups to members of the Major Group for greater transparency, accountability and legitimacy;
- Establish opportunities to interface with Government Representatives at the regional level. This is important for civil society in the region to put forward their messages to Government Representatives and to create opportunities for effective dialogue;
- Use technology to webcast all meetings and take advantage of social media such as twitter and email to collect questions and feedback during these meetings. Lessons could be learnt from UNFCCC working group meetings which are effectively using such technologies;
- Ensure there are stronger processes for local, national and sub-regional consultation to strengthen the regional process and ensure greater legitimacy.

Green economy and sustainable consumption and production: We are facing serious barriers to realizing sustainable management of natural resources and waste management. Barriers include ineffective government policies to align to sustainable development priorities and lack of public awareness and barriers to making producers abide to their responsibilities to green production. The significant influence of corporations over countries in shaping economic policies is preventing the realization of environmental and social objectives. At the same time, developed countries are affecting developing countries trade and cooperation agreements which do not address local people's needs. We can overcome these barriers by:

- Recognizing ecological limits in the greening of consumption and production and addressing it through:
 - Ensuring greater resource efficiency through reducing material input in the production pipeline;
 - Incentivizing industries to apply green solutions;
 - Shifting to sustainable energy systems and increasing renewable energy production;
 - Reviving and promoting traditional values and knowledge.
- Greening budgets through:
 - Auditing of budgets whether they contribute to greening or not;
 - Incentivizing industry and public efforts to implement green solutions;
 - Introducing policy meters for green budgets should also include wasteland development and increasing renewable energy use, and waste management policies.
- Community mobilizations towards green solutions and shaping economic development policies through:
 - Education, literacy, and campaigning for free access to correct information;
 - Strengthening work on community-based solutions to sustainable livelihoods, ecotourism, energy sources etc.;
 - Community-level ecological waste management such as teaching communities how to manage waste and at the same time advocate for government policies on ecological waste management.
- Support Common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR) and development justice by:
 - Giving Communities a say in determining their own development paths and priorities;
 - Supporting the increased consumption of poor people in the direction of addressing their needs for food, health and housing;
 - Creating better understanding of economic activities to realize social equity and greater regulation of the social economy and not relying on market-based solutions in reorienting the economy and changing the behavior and lifestyles of the public;
 - Lobbying governments and multilateral bodies so that economic development policies made at the national and international levels are oriented towards development justice.

Chemicals and Waste are having a damaging effect on the livelihoods of farming and rural communities affected by industrial agriculture and mining industry. Poor disposal of hazardous chemicals and GMOs are also affecting food security, human health and ecosystems. We call for the following measures:

At the National level:

- Ban riverine and ocean disposal of mine tailings;
- Encourage governments to sign on to relevant international conventions e.g. Rotterdam Convention, Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the Minamata Convention on Mercury, Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;
- Establish a Commission of Enquiry into contamination by mining companies, of which government is a shareholder;
- Shift to organic agriculture and/or reduction of chemicals in farming and local practices;
- Promote community-based certification schemes for organic products;
- Establish monitoring and evaluation of impacts on human health and soil, air and water quality;
- Establish participatory methodology for rural women to change to more sustainable farming systems;

- Introduce community-level waste management and recycling of green waste;
- Encourage governments to pass and implement chemical-specific legislation;
- Reinforce and implement capacity-building for users and traders in chemicals;
- Embed environmental services into social and economic systems, including micro-finance;
- Increase accountability of polluters through mechanisms that bind polluters to respect human rights;
- Respect and promote the use of traditional knowledge skills and practices for sustainable livelihoods.

International

- Invite the Special Rapporteur from UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous People's to carry out a report on compliance;
- Establish sub-regional and/or regional facilities for environmentally sound disposal of hazardous waste and products containing toxic substances, including e-waste and impose a ban on the export of toxic and hazardous waste from developed countries to under-developed countries which are being used as dumping grounds for such wastes;
- Establish sub-regional and/or regional facilities for a global program of monitoring human health for toxics and endocrine-disrupting chemicals;
- Establish sub-regional and/or regional mechanism to assess the potential environmental, social and economic impacts of new technologies and development interventions, with active participation of civil society;
- More collaboration between FAO and UNEP on funding the shift to organic farming.