



# UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

Programme des Nations Unies pour l'environnement      Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente

Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде

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10 G Street, NE, Suite 800

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## Key Messages from North American Major Groups and Stakeholders

Key points raised by participants in the UNEP North American Civil Society Consultation are enumerated below.

*These key messages reflect areas of general consensus from the meeting; however, the various groups present do not necessarily endorse every conclusion.*

**Developing a narrative:** The current environmental narrative is a reactive and deficit-based approach focusing on tragedy and guilt, instead of a proactive and positive narrative emphasizing the beauty of collaboration and well-being for all on a finite planet. UNEP should facilitate the development a new narrative that captures the urgency of the environmental challenges we face as opportunities for collaboration, inspires stakeholders to take action, creates new communal identities around environmental responsibility, and provides accessible terminology to the general public. UNEP has a central role to play in helping to develop this narrative, and should invite media and communications experts from various industries to support the initiative.

**Clearly link environment and development:** The environment is critical to economic development. Sustainable human and economic development depends on sustainable use of the earth's natural resources, which are finite. This link needs to be better articulated and communicated to stakeholders and decision-makers.

**Integration versus fragmentation:** While the concept of the three pillars of sustainable development aims to create a more comprehensive vision of development, in reality it contributes to a fragmented approach to sustainable development. A new concept of sustainable development is needed that acknowledges planetary limits and provides a truly integrated, systemic approach to development, which focuses on sustainable living systems and well-being.

Better integration is also needed within policy development and governance processes, so that different U.N. agencies, government ministries, and Major Groups pursue common goals together rather than independently.

**Advancing and communicating science:** UNEP should continue to pursue methods to collect, synthesize and disseminate scientific knowledge. Current efforts such as UNEP-Live should be strengthened and built upon. New communication technologies should be employed and UNEP should seek to engage more directly with the education community. Particular attention should

be given to communicating science to policymakers at all levels, so that they are both equipped with the facts they need to make scientifically-based decisions, as well as with an understanding as to why addressing urgent environmental issues such as climate change is in the best interest of their constituents. Civil society partners may serve as resources to policymakers in the translation of science to action.

**Regarding the post-Rio+20 and post-2015 agenda:**

- More effective engagement of civil society is needed in the implementation of important post Rio+20 processes, e.g. the 10 YFP, addressing areas beyond national jurisdiction in our oceans, and the SDGs.
- The development of sustainable development goals is an opportunity to address urgent environmental issues, such as oceans, urbanization, consumption and production, water and agriculture. It is critical that such goals be universal in application, as all countries should have a role to play in their implementation.
- The SDGs should be integrated with the formulation of post-2015 development goals. There should ultimately be one set of global goals, with sustainability as a core tenet for each goal.
- The SDGs should incorporate a process goal, such as a goal pertaining to sustainability indicators or environmental safeguards.
- Policy frameworks and SDG's focusing on poverty alleviation should incorporate goals applicable to poverty within all nations to ensure the needs of disadvantaged communities are universally addressed.

**Strengthening stakeholder participation within UNEP:** UNEP should seek to broaden its stakeholder engagement beyond Major Groups to increase the diversity of expertise and perspectives in environmental discussions. UNEP accreditation should be expanded to include local and national groups, and UNEP should expand and strengthen its engagement with the private sector. The role of the private sector as an implementer and driver of market transformation needs to be acknowledged and elevated.

**UNEP's environmental law program should be strengthened:** UNEP should support efforts to build capacity for robust environmental governance systems at the national level and help countries comply with and implement international environmental laws (e.g. MEAs). Additionally, more support is needed for the delivery of the Bali Strategic Plan.

**Advancing the Green Economy:** UNEP should seek to better integrate its Green Economy program with related programs such as SCP and climate change. Further, advancing a green economy will require metrics beyond GDP. Natural capital accounting should be used as a mechanism to account for resource depletion and the incorporation of pricing externalities. UNEP should explore new and innovative mechanisms to educate and build the capacity of local stakeholders and decision-makers to transition their communities to a green economy.

**Governance of High Seas:** UNEP should look beyond national state boundaries and address High seas governance as a priority issue.

**Gender Balance:** Gender balance is crucial to the creation of a sustainable future, since there is no community that does not include women. Gender balance must not be explored as a separate issue, but must be inclusive and universally applied as a key component in policy-making, environmental governance, and economic growth.