



# UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

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Программа Организации Объединенных Наций по окружающей среде      برنامج الأمم المتحدة للبيئة

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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, structured under the following themes:

- a) The Green Economy,
- b) Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD),
- c) Additional Messages for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20).

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

## ***With respect to the Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication***

- **We call on governments to reaffirm their commitment to sustainable development and poverty eradication, including implementing Agenda 21, and indicate their commitment by arriving in Rio with “to-do” lists of concrete steps they will take for implementation.** Such reaffirmation sends a strong signal of their prioritization of sustainable development and serves to support the mobilization of green economies at the national, regional, and global levels.
- Furthermore, **governments should establish a set of sustainable development goals**, with clear timelines and measurements of success, accompanied by an assessment process. Such goals should align with existing global development goals, including equity and gender equality.
- **Greater civil society participation is needed.** Clear and regular opportunities to provide input and expertise, in an equitable and more participatory manner, are needed. Existing stakeholder voices must be strengthened and expansion beyond the current major groups model should be considered with an aim of expanding participation. Furthermore, new stakeholders must be included in the dialogue, especially those involved in trade and economic policy, the WTO, economic and finance ministries.

- **Women** have a vital role in environmental management and development and their full participation is therefore essential to achieve sustainable development.
- **The transition to a green economy requires a fundamental shift in production and consumption patterns.** We call on governments to commit to the following to lead this transition:
  - Governments, at all levels, should commit to sustainable procurement practices to support environmental standards and social certification such as Fair Trade.
  - At Rio+20, governments should finalize the negotiation of the 10-year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production.
- **We call on governments to commit to the elimination of perverse subsidies in energy, agriculture, and other sectors.**
- **We call on governments to rethink their measurement of progress and incorporate more comprehensive and wellbeing indicators into their national accounts.**  
Measuring and tracking sustainable development requires more comprehensive measurement than measuring Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- **We support the use of financial incentives (e.g. tax reforms) that reward sustainable behaviors, thus reflecting full cost pricing and making it economically advantageous to do business in a sustainable manner.**
- **We call for increased training and start-up funding to support green jobs, particularly among young people.**  
Increasing knowledge of and opportunities for green jobs will help drive the transition to a green economy. Environmental education must be integrated into the education system, particularly within vocational and business schools. This not only helps generate a green workforce, but also provides entrepreneurs with the knowledge and tools they need to establish environmentally sustainable businesses.
- UNEP should provide **the international community with a clearinghouse of best practices in the environmental aspects of sustainable development.**  
Creating a repository of best practices enables the transfer of knowledge and capacity building, at both the national and sub-national level.
  - This repository of best practices could serve as the basis for a **global program or partnership that supports countries and communities in developing and implementing their local and national sustainability strategies and action plans.**  
Such assistance, including funding such as that promised local communities under Chapter 28 of Agenda 21, would help communities realize a green economy and achieve international sustainable development agreements.
- **We note that institutional frameworks for sustainable development, at all levels of governance, are necessary to promote the transition to a green economy.**

### ***With respect to the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD)***

We note that designing an effective institutional framework for sustainable development requires:

- A focus on the interconnectedness and interdependence of the social, ecological and economic pillars, and on the local and global as well as long term consequences of our actions;
- A balance between valuing activities in specific areas, sectors, issues and building institutional mechanisms that connect across these activities;
- Building effective governance architectures that facilitate connection, learning and implementation across scales (watershed management systems can serve as a model);
- Implementing Principle #10 on transparency, participation and accountability in all governance institutions and processes;
- The inclusion of civil society as a full partner in governance decision-making and implementation;
- The importance of designing governance interactions as open, interactive, facilitated dialogue with accessible language to engage diverse demographics, including women and Indigenous peoples; and
- An emphasis on institutional mechanisms for implementation, accountability, compliance, and enforcement, supported by a science based approach.

***Thus, we deliver the following messages on IFSD:***

- We call on the Rio + 20 conference to launch negotiations for the **establishment of an international convention on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration** that deals with access to information, public participation and environmental justice.
- We encourage countries to continue to **adopt Principle 10** in their domestic context, establish **environmental tribunals, freedom of information acts and pollution release inventories**, and create **enforcement mechanisms** that empower citizens to call for and seek legal recourse in terms of compliance to commitments, laws and regulations.
- We underscore the **importance of inclusive and comprehensive metrics for tracking implementation** of commitments and holding governments accountable for their commitments.
- We highlight **the critical role of national compliance and enforcement systems in holding governments accountable for national and international commitments**. We recommend **capacity building programs for parliamentarians, inspectors, prosecutors, and judges**, to ensure environmental laws and regulations are enforced at the national level.
- We call on governments to engage **Auditor Generals** in defining an international framework for ensuring accountability, compliance and enforcement.
- We call for a **strengthened UNEP** with funding and staff capacity that aligns with the scale and scope of its mandate. This could include upgrading UNEP to a specialized agency within the U.N.  
UNEP should be tasked with tracking implementation of national and international environmental commitments and should establish a review process that ensures countries are held accountable for their commitments.
- We ask for **linked UNEP / UNDP capacity building budgets** in order to facilitate a joint and complementary effort in capacity building that advances sustainable development, green economies and poverty eradication.
- We recommend **an in-depth analysis of barriers to and promising practices in implementing existing sustainable development commitments**, including Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, to inform strategic action. This analysis could

begin by taking stock of the extent to which each article has been implemented to date, and provide recommendations on how to fill existing gaps.

- We call for a **review of the existing civil society / Major Groups and Stakeholders model** to analyze its effectiveness, to explore alternative approaches (drawing on models from other international agencies) and to propose alternatives for consideration by countries at Rio +20.
- We call for **strengthening the integration of the three pillars of sustainable development within the U.N. system**. This could entail upgrading the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) to a permanent Council status, including in its mandate a focus on outcomes and on holding countries and international agencies accountable for implementing their sustainable development commitments. Key to such efforts would be the inclusion of civil society and stakeholders in decision-making processes.
- **We call on Rio+20 to pay special attention to the role of national and sub-national institutions and develop mechanisms that facilitate knowledge transfer and capacity building.**  
Effective national and sub-national frameworks that promote sustainability are critical for the success of sustainable development at the global level and thus local, municipal, sub-national and regional governments should be given increased status in international processes and negotiations. Furthermore, such frameworks should take into account the role of both urban and rural communities in promoting sustainable development practices. Rural communities, in particular, can benefit from local and regional mechanisms that inform and support community based approaches to sustainable development.
- **We recognize that the institutional framework for sustainable development includes private sector actors and that advancing sustainable development should include tracking and rewarding private sector efforts to implement environmentally sustainable and socially just practices.**
- We call for the establishment of a **Financial Transaction Tax** to help build social protection systems in the most vulnerable countries (e.g. the Least Developed Countries), contribute to sustainable climate adaptation, strengthen civil society worldwide and support more sustainable and equitable economies.
- We emphasize that **technology transfer for development** requires the transfer of know-how that **builds skills capacity** and that intellectual property rights, patent laws and other policies do not undermine such transfers, the delivery of public goods and the stimulation to develop new technological innovations.

#### **Regional institutional framework for sustainable development**

- We call the US and Canadian governments to develop a **North American Sustainable Consumption and Production Framework** in consultation and partnership with civil society, business, and other key stakeholders and which includes a review process and support mechanisms for implementation.
- We call on the US and Canadian governments to launch negotiations for the **establishment of a regional convention on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration that deals with access to information, public participation and environmental justice**.
- We call on the US and Canadian governments to develop a **Regional Framework on Sustainable Development**.

## ***Additional Messages for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)***

- **Rio+20 is an opportunity for concrete progress and implementation of commitments.**  
Science tells us we are running out of time and, while progress has been made since the Rio Earth Summit twenty years ago, we are bumping up against planetary boundaries. Current models of economic development are not sustainable.

The time for talking has passed, what is needed now is implementation. Governments have already made commitments to further sustainable development and poverty eradication – including Agenda 21, the Rio Conventions, and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation - and must now deliver on such commitments. We call on governments to utilize the opportunity of the Rio+20 Conference to set concrete goals with clear timelines and measurements of success. A proposal has already been introduced in the form of *Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*, and we welcome the establishment of such goals.

- **Rio+20 is an opportunity to inspire and re-ignite the Spirit of Rio.**  
Twenty years ago the Earth Summit inspired a generation of environmental leaders. Rio+20 must do the same and inspire citizens, especially Youth, around the globe to be leaders in advancing sustainability in their lives and in the lives of others. We need a new generation of global stewards who promote environmental and socially sustainable practices, including the principles of equity and solidarity.
- **Rio+20 can establish a shared understanding of sustainability and highlight the interconnectedness of the three pillars of sustainable development.**  
This shared understanding should incorporate shared values, such as the principles of equity and empathy for others.
- **Rio+20 should not be just another U.N. Conference but incorporate new approaches to dialogue and stakeholder engagement.**  
Rio+20 should be a new type of UN Conference. It must engage non-traditional actors in dialogue and provide an open and transparent forum.
- **We call on Heads of State and Government and Ministers of Finance to attend Rio+20.**