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Statement from the African Civil Society Forum to the 24th Session of UNEP Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum

1.   This statement provides recommendations of the African Regional Civil Society Forum meeting held in Nairobi on 26-27 October 2006 to the 24th Session of UNEP Governing Council.

2.   We, representatives of African Civil Society and Major Groups, recognize and appreciate the GC's and UNEP's willingness and endeavours to integrate and partner with civil society and major stakeholder groups in pursuing sustainable development globally. We particularly hail the establishment and operationalization of the Civil Society and Major Stakeholders Branch at UNEP and the institutionalization of regional and global civil society forums as part of the preparatory activities and processes intended to inform agenda of GC meetings in line with Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration.

3.   We also appreciate endeavours being made to make participation of civil society and major stakeholders real and meaningful through their accreditation and acceptance into sessions of GC meetings.

4.   The 8th UNEP African Civil Society Forum was held from 26th- 27the October 2006 in Nairobi, Kenya. Participants at this Forum deliberated on the key themes that will be considered during the 24th session of the UNEP Governing Council/GMEF and produced the following statement that reflects issues of concern for the African region .the statement includes recommendations to governments, multilateral agencies and regional integration organizations on the four themes of Gender and environment, Chemical Management and SAICM, Globalisation, Ecosystem Services and Human Well-Being and Poverty, and Water and environment.

5.   We implore governments and the 24th Session of the GC to uphold and build upon these gains and, in particular, to give due regard to the following recommendations of the preparatory African Regional Civil Society Forum meeting held in Nairobi on 26-27 October 2006

<u>**Making Civil Society and Stakeholders Participation Real**</u>

6.   Although the need for and principles of partnership between governments and civil society and other stakeholder groups are now well accepted, mechanisms of engagement are yet to be clearly defined. Civil society and other stakeholder participation remain largely in the form of pre-GC session consultations, reading of statements, side events at major meetings and ad hoc participation in conferences. There is need for UNEP to design a clear strategy on how to engage with civil society and major stakeholders.

7.   It is important that governments meaningfully include legitimate representatives of civil society and other stakeholders in official delegations to regional and international meetings. The GC could give guidelines on procedure and principles of selection as well as the proportion of delegates from civil society required for any international meeting.

<u>**Strengthening Regional and Global Civil Society Forums**</u>

8.   The regional and global civil society forums are critical inventions in the effort to incorporate all important stakeholders in shaping UNEP's agenda. It is, however, clear that both the

initiatives require additional financial and human resources to ensure better coordination and greater inclusiveness in order to enhance their legitimacy and impact.

9.   The African Civil Society Forum has an established an **Ad hoc Steering Committee** to steer participation of African stakeholders, articulate their sustainable development agenda and promote their partnership with UNEP and other relevant institutions and initiatives. The GC is called upon to recognize and support this initiative as a positive endeavour towards streamlining civil society engagement with UNEP.

10. Unlike the GC, the very critical African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) lacks a mechanism for bringing on board views of civil society and major stakeholders. We strongly urge African Governments to recommend and establish GC-like civil society preparatory meetings for AMCEN to provide opportunity for stakeholders to inform its agenda.

A.   Gender and Environment

11.   Women play key roles in managing and utilisation of the environment as shown in various UN documents including Agenda 21, The Beijing Conference in 1995, and the African Environment Outlook 2002 (AEO 1 2002)

12.   The UN CSD –12 further noted that though women's active participation in ensuring sustainable development is highly visible, the underlying problems at the policy and implementation levels result from failure to take into account gender specific approaches. e. g cost effective analysis in economic resource investment should take in consideration gender perspective

13.   ACS notes with concern that funds are increasingly being channelled through Governments and that gender issues remained a separate issue and was incorporated together with fields such as health and education.

14.   The ACS strongly suggest that gender perspective must cut across all operational activities and be integrated into strategies for poverty eradication, macroeconomic development, social protection, agriculture, rural development and peace and security

15.   United Nations Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (UN ESD) recognises the need for gender integration in achievements of its objectives to improve quality of education, reorient education to address local needs, create public awareness on sustainability issues and to capacity build trainers in the area of SD.

16.   The Bali Strategic Plan For Technology Support and Capacity building provides further guidance for the implementation of the UNEP Water Policy and Strategy.
Oftentimes women, especially those from indigenous communities whose culture promotes gender biases and exclusion, have been left out in decision-making processes and policy formulation even though they are the most affected by environmental degradation and are well placed to be part of the solutions.

17.   A.C.S commends the post-conflict assessment work of UNEP for example the environmental consideration of human displacement in Liberia, which was viewed from a gender perspective.

18.   A.C.S lauds the ongoing work by UNEP's Division of Early Warning and Assessment (DEWA) in developing an "Environment and Conflict Prevention" initiative whose aim is to coordinate and stimulate efforts to promote conflict prevention, peace, and cooperation through activities, policies, and actions related to environmental protection, restoration, and resources. We urge governments to wholly support the continuation of this process. We strongly recommend that gender perspectives be entrenched in this initiative

Recommendations

African civil society recommends:

19.   Therefore in the context of the Bali Strategic Plan raising awareness, training and education on gender and environment should be strengthened in the Africa region, both within the formal and non-formal systems of education with special attention paid to women from indigenous communities In particular, Civil Society in Africa support the implementation of the mentorship program for young women and encourage Governments to financially support this program

20.   Civil Society support strengthening of research on gender and environment, generating gender disaggregated data including statistics on indigenous women and environment and recommends the creation of a Gender and environment Trust Fund for CS in Africa to facilitate mainstreaming Gender and Environment in implementation of environment programs.

21.   A.C.S urges Governments to empower UNEP to take concrete steps and measures including affirmatives actions to bring on board both men and women from all Major Groups in decision-making processes, with a special attention to under-represented groups such as indigenous peoples

22.   A.C.S commits to be at the forefront in setting up a women environment network for Africa whose roles will include identifying and sharing best practices on GE as well as existing women groups representatives, We call on governments to empower UNEP to facilitate the set up of the aforementioned women environment network which will then assist in the identification and mobilization of participants from major groups for consultative meetings.

23.   A.C. S urges governments and UNEP to recognise women's gender based peculiar roles when assigning them responsibilities and especially in ensuring full participation in all on-going consultations. There is a need to come up with clear policies to ensure gender mainstreaming with active involvement of women and particularly indigenous women in their own situations to participate in the decision-making, management and sustainability of the environment.

24.   There is a need to establish and strengthen mechanisms to facilitate equal participation of all stakeholders particularly women at the grass roots and marginalized and indigenous communities and urges governments and UNEP to integrate the issue of protection of women in post-conflict situation in regard to access to land and resources among others by analysing gender specific needs and roles

B.   Chemical Management and SAICM

25.   The **Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) provides a policy framework for efforts to achieve the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation goal that, by 2020,** chemicals are used and produced in ways that minimize significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. It addresses all relevant sectors, including agriculture,

environment, health, industry and labour, and seeks to mainstream chemical safety as a crosscutting sustainable development issue. The Strategic Approach engages stakeholders from Governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, trade unions and business associations.

26.   African civil society greatly welcomes the **adoption of SAICM at the First International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-I)**, and its endorsement by the various intergovernmental organizations, and expresses its full commitment for the SAICM implementation and monitoring process on the continent.

27.   **African civil society is still deeply concerned with regards to the** poor management of chemicals and waste **on the continent, which has resulted in harm, both to the environment and to public health.**

28.   **We realize that one of the causes of poor chemical management in Africa is** the weak policy, legal and institutional framework in African countries**. Therefore, the African Civil Society is recalling on African governments, with assistance from the international community, including the SAICM Secretariat, to put in place the** necessary legal and institutional frameworks on sound chemicals management by enacting appropriate legislation and enforcement mechanisms that embrace core principles as outlined in Agenda 21**, including the precautionary principle, the extended producer responsibility, liability and compensation principles, the polluter-pays principles, right to information and the full and inclusive participation of all stakeholders.**

29.   African civil society is deeply concerned with the failure of the COP-3 of the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent (PIC) for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade to include *Crysotile Asbestos* on the Annex III of the Convention, and also invites all governments, particularly developed countries, to achieve a compromise during the COP-4 scheduled to 2008 for the early and rapid implementation of the decisions;

30.   African civil society fully supports the resolution of the fifth session of the International Forum on Chemicals Safety (IFCS-V) calling on synergies and collaborative approaches between the IFCS and the SAICM, so avoiding duplication of efforts and functions in chemicals work;

31.   African civil society also supports further synergies and cooperation between the three main conventions (Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade), as well as welcomes the quick establishment of the Joint Working Group between these three chemicals and waste conventions, following decision by the Basel Convention COP-8 to be held in Nairobi from 27 November to 1 December 2006.

B.   Recommendations

African civil society recommends:

32.   Advocacy of further political will and engagement from the African governments with regards to SAICM, and increased financial support from the donor countries and development partners to enable SAICM Secretariat perform its responsibilities for early implementation of various recommendations in Africa;

33.   Promotion of advocacy, communication and education activities in order to raise public awareness on chemicals issues, particularly on Lead, Cadmium and Mercury; and the promotion of social and public watch to increase community involvement in caring humans settlements;

34.   That **SAICM Secretariat** assists civil society networks and non-governmental organizations by providing technical advice, scientific information and financial support;

35.   That all those African governments that have not yet nominated National Focal Points for SAICM should do so as soon as possible, preferably before the next International Conference on Chemicals Management scheduled to 2009;

36.   **SAICM Secretariat** should make additional efforts to accredit NGO Focal Points at the country and regional levels, alongside the SAICM National and Regional Focal Points nominated by the Governments, so that multi-stakeholder nature of SAICM is promoted and enhanced nationally, regionally and at the international level;

37.   **SAICM Secretariat** to evaluate the nomination process of National Focal Points, as it has already caused duplication of work and institutional conflict within national governments in Africa;

38.   Capacity building of existing and new governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations dealing with sound chemicals management;

39.   UNEP and SAICM Secretariat should provide on-going technical advice and capacity building to the African countries with regard to application of Prior Informed Consent Procedures for certain chemicals, in order to **avoid the recurrence of the recent Côte d' Ivoire´s catastrophe;**

40.   Promotion of market-based regulations and legislative mechanisms for sound chemicals management in Africa;

41.   Assist and support African states with the management of chemical products in accordance of Chap 19 of Agenda 21 on Environmentally Sound Management of Toxic Chemicals, including prevention of Illegal International Traffic in Toxic and Dangerous Products. (AEO 2002 pp 402)

42.   **SAICM Secretariat** to ensure multi-stakeholder participation in SAICM activities, including increased participation of non-governmental organizations from Africa in the process;

43.   **UNEP and SAICM Secretariat** should support technically and financially the African Union (AU) to convene the long-awaited First Conference of the Parties (COP) for the Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste within Africa;

44.   African governments should continue to integrate sound chemicals management into national socio-economic development planning with full participation of all stakeholders;

45.   African governments should accelerate their ratification process for those chemicals-related to multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Bamako, Rotterdam, Stockholm and the Basel Conventions;

46.   **UNEP and SAICM Secretariat** should continue their efforts in early warning systems, management and environmental assessment mechanisms in Africa with regards to chemicals management;

47.   African civil society themselves should continue to promote public-awareness, educational and training tools for sound chemicals management in Africa, with the support of **UNEP, SAICM** Secretariats and governments;

48.   Participating Governments of SAICM should empower and enhance technically and financially the SAICM Secretariat in order to implement its mandate and functions;

49.   Moral responsibility from the international community, particularly the developed countries, with regards to import of chemicals and waste to developing countries, particularly in those vulnerable regions, such as Africa;

50.   Donor countries to continue providing the necessary and additional funds for SAICM implementation so that, by 2020, and in Africa, chemicals are used and produced in ways that minimize significant adverse effects on human health and the environment;

C.   Water and environment

Issues

51.   Water is one of the most critical natural resource issues in Africa as exhibited by the following pertinent statistics. More than 1.1 billion people worldwide do not have access safe drinking water and by year 2025 this number will grow to 3.0 billion, 90% of waste water discharged to waterways in developing countries goes untreated and 4 million children die each year from water related diseases. More than 300 million people lack reasonable access to safe water. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 51 percent of the population has access to safe water. 14 countries in Africa are currently subject to water stress or scarcity with those in the Northern Africa facing the worst prospects. 11 more countries will join them in the next 25 years. The rising demand for increasingly scarce water resources is leading to growing concerns about future access to water particularly where water resources are shared between countries.
(*Report of the African CSO's, Consultation on the occasion of the Pan African Implementation and Partnership Conference on Water: PANAFCON 8-12 December 2003 Addis Ababa, Ethiopia*)

52.   There is need to recognize that access to water is a basic human right that is essential for achieving gender equality, sustainable development and poverty alleviation and governments are ultimately responsible for the guaranteeing provision in basic needs including adequate water and sanitation to women and their families.

53.   Water stress, a direct result of water scarcity, may result in conflict over shared water resources in the continent. The human population, due to an exponential growth rate in water demand, is already in conflict with the natural environment (i.e. ecosystems) over the available freshwater resources. Clean water is often not adequately appreciated, except where access to water resources is limited.

54.   Millions in Africa already have no access to potable water. Water scarcity is expected to increase due to increased water demand accompanied by an increase in population in drought-prone areas and possible future decreases in precipitation.

55.   Global and regional water resources assessment programmes suffer from a lack of endorsement by governments. There are various reasons, such as a lack of capacity within water ministries, although the existing global comprehensive data sources and associated analyses will be of tremendous benefit to relevant water institutions.

56.   There is, however, a growing tendency to form regional networks and partnerships to holistically address issues impacting on the limited water resources.

57.   Water security including water safety is a pre requisite for economic growth and poverty reduction in Africa. This requires huge investment beyond the capabilities of most African countries hence the urgent need for institutional strengthening and recognition of transboundary nature of continents water.

58.   As human influence on climate is becoming increasingly apparent, water managers must design strategies to cope effectively with today's climate variability to tomorrow's climate change, which is likely to increase water stress already stressed regions. Impacts on climate variability and change on ground water resources should also be considered.

Recommendations

African civil society recommends:

58.   Encourage African countries to participate in the UNEP / GEMS water programme by developing appropriate monitoring techniques/tools supported by the implementation of cost-effective approaches of data collection through training programmes focusing on participation at grassroots level.

59.   Promote a global change research programme, in association with regional research facilities, in order to comprehensively address the water cycle and its modification through human interaction to reduce uncertainties in support of adaptive water management and foster stronger collaboration with African scientists and with African policy and decision makers.

60.   There is potential for rainwater harvesting as a supplement/alternative for limited (where applicable) local water resources in the continent – it should be promoted and integrated into the mainstream water development agendas of each country. There is need for an investigation on the implementation of rainwater harvesting programmes, including ensuring the quality of the water.

61.   Comprehensive assessments of vulnerability of water resources to environmental change for all River / Lake Basins are urgently needed to manage vulnerability risks through adaptation and mitigation measures and integrated management options.

62.   Comprehensive assessments of groundwater resources, including groundwater recharge for sustainable yield determinations, are required for water availability and appropriate water resource management.

63.   The establishment of networks of early warning systems to monitor groundwater pollution in urban and peri-urban areas.

66.   It is important, with a transboundary approach, to evaluate the root causes rather than the symptomatic causes in categorizing and ranking the issues and concerns that determine priorities for remedial and mitigation actions with regard to the water resource management.

67.   Equitable and sustainable management of rivers and other water basins is a pre-requisite for the maintenance of reliable supplies of clean water.

68.   Governments and development agencies should invest in ecosystem health as an integral part of Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM) strategies in order to secure livelihoods and provision of environmental functions, goods and services.

69.   Pursue integrated approaches (such as IRBM) to water management for food and environment that embrace the water requirements of aquatic ecosystems and fisheries and the livelihoods that are dependent upon these. This should include coastal ecosystems that are dependent on freshwater flows for their productivity.

70.   Encourage water policy and governance processes that embrace all key stakeholders, including farmers, fishers, and pastoralists, and are informed with high- quality contemporary analyses of these livelihood systems and their water requirements.

71.   Ensure that future approaches to water management and information support systems are rooted in effective engagement with local communities who depend upon these water resources and their aquatic ecosystems for their health and livelihoods.

72.   Accelerated technical support and capacity building measures should be undertaken to improve and expand the participation of African countries, experts and civil society groups in international water quantity and quality monitoring and risk assessment programmes with priority attention to the protection of the health of the poor majority of our people and the freshwater ecosystems on which their livelihoods depend." (Water monitoring and assessment)

73.   Priority attention should be given to the equitable use and sustainable management of the freshwater ecosystems shared by our communities and countries with water quality standards and environmental water allocations incorporated in all existing and future international agreements on shared water resources, including the availability and sustainability of our groundwater resources which are too often mined rather than managed. (Shared water resources:)

74.   As the lack of access to safe water and sanitation constitute a major threat to the health of the poor majority of our people and to the sustainability of the freshwater and coastal ecosystems on which their livelihoods and lives depend, our countries should urgently adopt annual strategic plans and budgets from the community to regional levels to meet the agreed targets of reducing by half by 2015 the proportion of our people without access to safe water and sanitation and start implementing those plans in 2004 with our development cooperation partners. (Safe water and sanitation targets:)

75.   Key stakeholders and civil society groups should be directly involved in decision-making and implementation of more effective water management and efficient use policies with special attention to innovative and low cost data collection methods (e.g. use of school students with inexpensive and potable water testing kits) and water supply technologies such as rainwater harvesting and sub-surface dams. (Involvement of key stakeholders:).

76.   African civil society recognizes that Agriculture is the 'engine' of economic growth in the continent. Therefore we call for policy and institutional reforms in Agribusiness that promote Agriculture in the context of Integrated Water Resources Management. (IWRM). There is need to support for African countries to support the Collaborative Programme on opportunities for investments in agricultural water in Africa

77.   African Civil Society and especially women's organization should direct their efforts to adopt and implement the Universal Declaration on water rights and Women's needs especially those of indigenous women should be addressed.

Globalisation, Ecosystem Services, Human Well-Being and Poverty.

Issues

78.   Globalisation has been discussed in the UNEP GC19/6 on Globalisation and the Environment Emerging Issues on the Environment and Trade Agenda (1997); it has also been deliberated at the Malmo Declaration (2000). It has been further elaborately deliberated at the Millennium Declaration (2000) and further at the WSSD (2002) and the World Summit (2005).

79.   Globalisation is a multi dimensional economic, social, cultural, economic political and technological. It is interdependence at the global level; it affects people all over the world.It impacts ecosystems services (water, biodiversity) and human well being (health, human rights and poverty)

80.   The African Civil Society memberships note that several linkages exist between poverty and ecosystems namely: -

- A close relationship between many of the constituents of well-being and the provisioning, regulating and enriching components of ecosystems
- A close interdependency among the constituents of well being with each other and the synergy we can reap for achieving the constituents by addressing one or more constituent
- The provisioning service of ecosystems is highly influenced by the regulating services. Over harvesting, over use, mis-use or excessive conversion of ecosystems into human and artificial systems damages the regulation service which in turn reduces the flow of the provisioning service provided by ecosystems, exclusionary practices, intentional or unintentional, by the non poor prevented the poor from having access to the various services offered by ecosystems.
- The poor bear a disproportionately heavy burden of impacts of ecosystem degradation that, in a majority of cases, were caused by the non poor
- The poor are excluded from participating in the equitable manner in the commercial activities that were introduced into converted ecosystems

81.   There are a variety of the drivers influencing the links between well-being and ecosystems. Some of the main drivers observed are institutional failure, lack of appropriate instruments, inefficient government agencies, lack of participation and involvement by the poor in decision making, lack of economic facilities, lack of social opportunities like safety nets, gender based exclusion, lack of ecological security of protection from adverse events and the distrust of bureaucracies and formal institutions due to lack of transparency surrounding common property resources and the equitable transfer of rights during privatisation.

82.   Women, youth, children and the indigenous peoples bear the brunt of the negative impacts of these and other aspects of globalisation with no safety nets in place to address problems associated with loss of livelihoods and jobs particularly among farmers and the fisher folk.

83.   The annual World Bank publication, African Development Indicators (ADI) 2006, finds that after decades of setbacks, an increasing number of African countries are lifting a good fraction of their citizens above the poverty line and sending more children to school. But the region still needs help from wealthy nations to achieve Millennium Development Goals (MDG's) by improving governance, accelerating and sustaining growth and job creation, delivering services, and fighting poverty, according to the report.

African civil society recommends:

To address the critical issues of environment and poverty:
- There is need for greater participation of civil society in the poverty and environment program of UNEP, as recognized in the conceptual framework and elaborated in Exploring Linkages publication of UNEP.
- African Civil Society Forum has to develop an African Civil Society Forum has to develop a strategic and concerted response to this interrogation.
- response to this interrogation
- There is need for resource persons from UNEP to take part in the discussions within the groups.
- African Civil Society welcomes UNEP's focus and approach on equity and fairness in the context of globalization and the access to and the use of the ecosystem services.
- There is need to consider what particular role the global and local civil society can play to make sure that ecosystem services are used in a sustainable and equitable way.
- There is urgency to maximize the net positive impact on the globalization on the sustainable use of ecosystem services to improve human well-being and reduce poverty.
- New forms are needed in the present systems of international governance and institutional structures to ensure equitable and fair access and use of ecosystem services emerging from globalization.
- Forms of incentives are needed to promote environmentally sustainable investment and leadership by the private sector, which is propelled by globalization.
- There is need for further environmental legislation to ensure equitable and fair access to the use of ecosystem services if markets are found to be an efficient instrument to ensure equitable use.
- It is vital to factor in the role of global and local civil society in ensuring equitable access to and use of ecosystem services in the context of globalization.
- There is need for the empowerment of youth and indigenous peoples through relevant legal mechanisms to protect them from negative effects of globalization.
- There is need to create awareness among NGO's on the role of UNEP in the UN reform process in order to ensure fairness of the access and use of ecosystem services.

Other African Regional issues

84.   Africa is already under pressure from climate stresses, which increase vulnerability to further climate change and reduce adaptive capacity. The key vulnerable sectors and areas for Africa include water, agriculture, human health, biodiversity and ecosystems, and sea level rise.

85.   Africa's biodiversity is currently under threat from natural and human pressures; climate change will be an additional stressor and may lead to changes in habitats, causing species migration or extinction for both flora and fauna.

86.   Climate change has the potential to undermine economic development, increasing poverty and delaying or preventing the realization of the Millennium Development Goals. Particularly, the lack of effective adaptation to the adverse effects of climate change can jeopardize the achievement of MDG goal 1 (eradicating extreme poverty and hunger), goal 6 (combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases) and goal 7 (ensuring environmental sustainability).

African civil society recommends:

87.   Some African communities have developed traditional adaptation strategies to cope with climate variability and extreme events. Experience with these strategies needs to be shared among communities.

88.   Mainstreaming climate change considerations into development strategies and country policies and programmes will be key to ensuring that development efforts are not undone by climate change. In addition, African governments need help in developing synergies between all of the Rio Conventions.

89.   We urge a deliberate effort as part of the UNFCCC process, to provide specific funds for African national and regional projects from the GEF's Trust Fund and the special funds including the Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF) and the Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF).

In Conclusion

90.   African Civil Society strongly urge governments and UNEP to strengthen the Regional Office for Africa (UNEP/ROA) and the Civil Society Branch within the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch in order to fully operationalize partnership with civil society and major stakeholders as a model for actualizing Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration within the UN system.

91.   African Civil Society stands ready to work closely with UNEP and all governments to face the complex challenges posed to sustainability on the continent.

92.   We, Members of the African Civil Society Forum, in our diversity are ready and willing to play our constructive role in fostering sustainable development at national, regional and international level by drawing on the experiences and knowledge from different fora and processes so that the 3 pillars of sustainable development are fully balanced and integrated.