

## **7<sup>th</sup> Global Civil Society Statement to the 9<sup>th</sup> Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum, Dubai, February, 2006**

1. Civil Society Organizations welcome the opportunity to present this Global Civil Society Statement to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Ninth Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF). More than 300 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and other civil society representatives met in six consultative meetings worldwide to provide input to this statement.<sup>1</sup>

2. As Agenda 21 states, “the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances.”<sup>2</sup> Given that only limited resources are available to sustain and promote human well being, more efficient production and consumption patterns are essential. Achieving this will require scientific and technical advances; more importantly, however, it will also require fundamental changes in the values that drive societal development, as well as the political will needed to make such changes. We must develop a broader vision of welfare that aims to satisfy needs rather than increased consumption for its own sake. Government policies and multilateral financing mechanisms that are guided solely by market-oriented principles will not ensure the realization of this broader vision.

3. This Global Civil Society Statement begins by offering observations and recommendations of overarching applicability, and then turns to the three main issue areas on the agenda of the 9th GC/GMEF: chemicals management, energy and the environment, and tourism and the environment.

### **A. Overarching Issues**

4. We welcome UNEP’s commitment to facilitate meaningful participation by civil society in UNEP activities and in international and national processes, programmes, and initiatives. We note that participatory rights of civil society have improved in several international fora, yet those improvements continue to be resisted or even challenged by some Governments. Thus, we urge the GMEF and all Governments to renew their commitment to Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development by, among others means, adopting and abiding by the principle of prior informed consent of affected communities; enhancing participation of indigenous peoples and other under-represented minorities and groups in sustainable development decision-making; and ensuring the active participation of all stakeholders in multilateral environmental, health, and sustainable development activities. The participation of youth, including through youth employment, is also vital to finding solutions to global environmental problems.

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<sup>1</sup> This statement builds upon the six regional statements developed during consultative meetings facilitated by UNEP in October and November 2005. The six regional consultations included Africa, Asia and the Pacific, West Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and North America. All six regional statements are annexed to this global statement. This global statement has been drafted in the recognition that business and industry and youth groups have their own processes in place and will separately present their views to the GC/GMEF.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Conference on Environment & Development, Agenda 21, chptr. 4.3 (1992).

5. Solutions to global environmental problems must be based on holistic approaches that facilitate coherence among multiple sectors and stakeholders. We therefore welcome UNEP's sponsorship of the first global Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment in January 2006, and we encourage similar multi-thematic consultations.

6. We call on UNEP, the GC/GMEF, and all Governments to reinvigorate efforts to promote education for sustainable development by devising and making use of effective tools that encourage environmentally friendly behaviour by all actors. A strong, objective scientific approach is essential to foster understanding of the value of ecosystems services for conservation of life support systems and the alleviation of poverty. UNEP initiatives such as, inter alia, the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building (Bali Plan) and civil society-based national UNEP committees are important components in achieving these objectives.

7. The frequency and recurring devastation of natural disasters gravely concerns civil society. We ask UNEP, with all possible speed and in cooperation with appropriate relief and aid agencies and intergovernmental organizations, to develop, promote, and increase the preparedness of relevant entities to implement post-disaster emergency and reconstruction plans that incorporate sustainable and environmentally sound approaches to: waste disposal and cleanup; rebuilding of transportation systems, energy systems, and other infrastructure; restoration of agricultural and industrial capacity; provision of emergency and permanent housing; and renewal of commercial activities, including tourism. We would also draw attention to other vulnerable regions of the world, such as the Arctic region that may soon develop into an environmental disaster. This region bears today a disproportionate burden from the harmful effects of certain industrial activities, in particular, those related to energy and chemicals production, use, and disposal. Civil society, including NGOs, call upon governments and UNEP to eliminate the root causes of these harmful activities.

8. Civil society rejects the proliferation and continued stockpiling of nuclear weapons. Keeping in mind that issues of nuclear energy waste disposal have not been resolved, nuclear energy remains a security and health threat. We thus oppose the development of new nuclear energy plants and the continued use of existing nuclear plants. We ask Governments to deal immediately with the harmful effects on human beings and the environment in many of the world's regions from the production and storage of nuclear weapons and waste from nuclear energy plants.

## **B. Chemicals Management**

9. Chemicals offer many societal benefits, but the improper or inadequate management of chemicals, including substances in products and wastes and from accidents and releases, threatens the human rights to life, health, and well-being of all people, especially children, vulnerable populations, and future generations. Currently, decisions on production or authorization of chemicals are, too often, based on an evaluation of chemical effects on healthy adults, when they should instead be directed to protecting the most sensitive groups, particularly developing children.

10. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) is the action plan to achieve, by 2020, that chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.<sup>3</sup> The

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<sup>3</sup> The 2020 goal was adopted in the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Plan of Implementation, para. 23 (2002).

SAICM is a crucial part of the global effort to protect human health and the environment and promote sustainable development. While civil society organisations including NGOs have been supportive of the SAICM process, we urge governments to address its many gaps and deficiencies, including those related to pharmaceuticals, food additives, and radioactive chemicals.

11. We urge all governments and participating stakeholders in the negotiations on the SAICM to agree that:

- a) The SAICM represents a political, moral, and ethical commitment to work toward achieving the 2020 goal. We urge all governments promptly to adopt and implement the SAICM. Civil society organizations support the SAICM leading to the adoption of a legally binding international instrument.
- b) Implementation of the SAICM must include measures to phase out and require safer substitutes and solutions when a chemical causes significant adverse effects to human health or the environment under its ordinary conditions of production, use, or disposal in a country or region.
- c) Implementation of the SAICM must embrace core principles and approaches of Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration, and other relevant international agreements, including the precautionary principle, liability and compensation, public participation, comprehensive right-to-know laws, the polluter-pays principle, and others. Additionally, the principle of “no data, no market” should be adopted and implemented in all countries. The SAICM should provide guidance on how these principles and approaches can be applied to sound chemical management.
- d) The institutional arrangements for implementation of the SAICM must be dynamic, fully participatory, multi-sectoral, and multi-stakeholder. They should build upon the participatory practices of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS), but they should provide more authority, be better integrated into the United Nations system, and create a secretariat with sufficiently robust resources and mandate to ensure successful implementation.
- e) The SAICM can succeed only if it includes a financial mechanism that provides substantial new and additional funds to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and only if such funds are used effectively.

12. Civil society welcomes the adoption by the 23rd Governing Council of Decision 23/9 on chemicals management, which instructs UNEP to further develop its Mercury Programme and requests Governments and other stakeholders to take immediate actions to reduce the risks to human health and the environment posed on a global scale by mercury in products and production processes. We recognize, however, that there is much additional work that remains to be done. We urge the GC/GMEF and Governments to make every effort to:

- a) Phase out anthropogenic sources of mercury and other metals of concern by creating and implementing an effective and coordinated strategy for global reduction of supply, use and release, including through immediate reduction activities, the development of a legally binding global instrument on mercury, and the addition of methyl mercury to the list of chemicals in the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

- b) Secure the ratification and consolidated implementation by all countries of the Stockholm Convention (and any amendments for additional POPs), and other chemicals and wastes agreements including the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent; the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, including its Ban Amendment; the 1996 Protocol to the Convention on the Prevention of Marine Pollution by Dumping of Wastes and Other Matter (London Convention); the ILO Convention 170 Concerning Safety in the Use of Chemicals at Work; the Globally Harmonized System (GHS), and relevant regional chemicals and wastes agreements.
- c) Encourage donor countries and donor agencies to provide new and additional financial and technical assistance that enables developing countries and countries with transitional economies to implement fully all their commitments under international chemicals and wastes agreements and initiatives.
- d) Promote establishment of a chemical safety focal area within the Global Environment Facility (GEF) with new and additional funds to encompass the GEF's present POPs Operational Programme, additional operational programmes that support implementation of other chemicals conventions and initiatives on mercury and other metals of concern, and integrated approaches to chemicals management called for in the SAICM.
- e) Encourage UNEP to collaborate with the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, and other relevant organizations to identify opportunities for promoting consistency between occupational and environmental protection from chemicals and for monitoring health and chemical exposures of workers and other sectors of the general population.
- f) Support and strengthen the capacity of the UNEP Chemicals Branch to facilitate the implementation of chemicals-related multilateral agreements and initiatives and to assist governments and civil society in global actions for the sound management of chemicals.

13. Additionally, we request Governments to take actions at the national and local levels to:

- a) Prohibit, except for bona fide public health and research purposes, the production and export of chemicals and technologies when the use of those chemicals and technologies is banned within their own borders.
- b) Adopt zero waste strategies, emphasizing source recovery, employment generation, and community ownership.
- c) Phase out all production, sale, and use of leaded gasoline.

### **C. Energy for Sustainable Development**

14. Energy is both an engine of development and a source of many of the problems the world faces today. Some 2.4 billion people in developing countries lack modern fuels for cooking and heating and approximately 1.6 billion people do not have access to electricity. Yet human activities, primarily the combustion of fossil fuels, have caused the Earth to warm

and its climate change on both global and regional scales since the pre-industrial era, with most of the warming occurring during the last 50 years. Global warming represents an ecological time bomb that threatens the very existence of Small Island Developing States and other low-lying regions, Arctic indigenous cultures and other resource-dependent peoples, and countless animal and plant species throughout the world.

15. The current energy infrastructure is unsustainable, vulnerable to natural disasters, and woefully insufficient in many developing countries. Energy wastage during the course of production and transmission is a serious problem. Perhaps half of the forecasted growth in global greenhouse gas emissions could be avoided by greater energy efficiency alone. Energy poverty is a barrier to sustainable development for many poorer rural communities in all regions of the world. Although the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) lack explicit targets related to the provision of energy to the poor, access to affordable energy is imperative for poverty alleviation and sustainable human development.

16. Pricing and taxation policies for petroleum should be restructured to reflect its true cost as a depletable resource, taking into account the social, economic, and environmental concerns of consuming as well as producing countries. Governments must adopt coherent and comprehensive energy strategies that include conservation measures, dramatic subsidies reforms, and education and capacity building regarding energy efficiency and renewable energy. Such strategies should integrate energy policy with land use, urban planning, eco-housing projects, and viable transportation options to encourage the use of public transportation. Those Governments experiencing increasing oil revenues, both from production and taxation, should invest sufficient portions of those revenues into research and development of sustainable and renewable energy.

17. Governments should provide incentives, within legal and policy frameworks, for public, private, and community level action towards greater fuel efficiency and the use of appropriate technologies. Countries with such incentive systems can serve as examples of utility based incentives for Renewable Energy Technologies (RETs), tax incentives, fuel displacement levies and feed-in laws, extension of loans to renewable energy promoters and consumers shifting to RETs, market mechanisms, and pricing policies such as net metering facilities and tax-exemption on public bus purchases. Such incentives have the potential of encouraging private sector players to promote the use of renewable energy, including wind, solar, and hydropower. Developed countries should further international cooperation to transfer renewable energy technologies and capacity building to developing countries. However, efforts by developed nations to provide energy from waste incineration must be opposed as incineration emits large amounts of toxins and other substances harmful to the environment in general and to human beings in particular.

18. Governments should implement existing commitments with relevance to energy for sustainable development, including those made in Agenda 21, the WSSD, and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Additionally, we call upon Governments to specify and agree on measures to address climate change in the energy sector at CSD-14 in 2006 and 2007, when climate change will be on the agenda. It is critical for countries to implement fully and expeditiously the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, its Kyoto Protocol, and related climate change agreements, policies, and partnerships. All stakeholders working within the intergovernmental system should explore decreasing and offsetting carbon emissions from civil aviation related to their work.

19. Under the Bali Strategic Plan of Action for Technology Support and Capacity Building to developing countries, UNEP should act as an intermediary in supporting the manufacturing base for RETs in less-developed countries. Civil society strongly recommends advancing the technical development and commercial viability of renewable energy systems by implementing a supportive policy framework as outlined by the “Policy Recommendations for Renewable Energies” emerging from the International Conference for Renewable Energies, Bonn 2004, and by committing long-term financial support to the Renewable Energy & Energy Efficiency Partnership (REEEP). Governments and UNEP should support research into the new development area of carbon capture and storage and on possible sustainable uses of fossil fuels, but this should not be used to divert support from research and application of renewable energy.

20. The high dependency on biomass energy by populations in some regions, especially Africa and among marginalized communities in some developed countries, coupled with the fast-diminishing availability of forest products due to inefficient production and end-use technologies, is a source of concern for both developing and developed countries. We call on Governments to promote sustainable fuels and efficient equipment for heating, lighting, and cooking recognising that bio-fuels can play a significant role in addressing these needs, particularly in rural areas.

21. Though hydropower offers promising potential as an energy source, adverse effects must be prevented or managed through the promotion of multi-stakeholder dialogues involving civil society, Governments, and other relevant actors to ensure implementation of the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams (WCD) in specific national or regional contexts. We feel however, that the construction of big dams should be opposed.

22. Civil society requests UNEP to initiate and complete a multi-stakeholder process to develop a compelling vision for development based on affordable and secure access to environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable energy services. This vision should include regional cooperation in research, production and distribution of energy, to secure equitable access and efficiency.

23. The GC/GMEF should mandate UNEP to develop, expand and implement a programme to train energy policymakers to understand the implications of energy issues by evaluating the environmental, social, and economic sustainability performance of conventional and emerging energy technologies; and to consider how to promote enabling policy and legal frameworks for sustainable energy technology innovation and dissemination. UNEP can also facilitate exposure visits and knowledge sharing among countries and civil society groups to assist them in the cost-intensive process of experimentation and learning.

24. Due to the vulnerability of the energy sector to corruption during the privatization process, governments and development partners should ensure that appropriate mechanisms are put in place to ensure transparency and good governance, as a prerequisite to privatization. Governments should also strengthen their regulatory role with regard to the energy sector, so as to protect the public from exploitation by private sector players, especially multinational corporations. Government should involve civil society in multi-stakeholder participatory processes during the design, implementation, and monitoring of energy programmes.

## **D. Sustainable Tourism**

25. Sustainable tourism is an approach to tourism that integrates ethical, social, and environmental considerations in an economically viable way. Tourism plays an important role in the global economy and in the livelihoods of millions of people across the world. More than eight per cent of all jobs are linked to tourism and travel. Tourism can have key impacts in the fight to reduce poverty and in progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. Because of its dependence on a healthy global environment, the tourism industry is acutely sensitive to environmental change and degradation, including from chemicals, wastes, increased pressure on scarce water resources, and climate change effects.

26. Environmental limits to the growth of tourism must be identified and enforced before irreversible damages occur, such as loss of species and habitats. Governments must minimise environmental degradation by ensuring that comprehensive and robust environmental impact assessments and audits are conducted for proposed and existing tourism activities. These should lead to better information for decision-making.

27. Natural resources integrated into tourism products provide substantial revenue for Governments, both directly and indirectly, but this revenue is not matched by the level of national budgetary allocations for natural resources management. UNEP and Governments should further develop and implement research and analysis methodologies concerning valuation of ecosystem services. The outcomes of these analyses should form the basis for allocating the necessary resources for the sustainable management of the natural resources base, and should include mechanisms that compel public and private sector institutions to pay the full value for ecosystem goods and services.

28. Governments should make efforts to create an enabling environment for sustainable tourism by incorporating the principles of partnerships, decentralization, and participatory decision-making among all stakeholders.

29. There is an economic over-dependency on tourism in some developing countries, which highlights the need to seek more balanced growth. Unsustainable tourism negatively impacts many people, especially women, children, and youth (for example, as a result of sex tourism); indigenous and other local communities; peoples of mixed descent; and other marginalised groups.

30. Economic liberalisation has, too often, jeopardised local and indigenous culture, and affected communities are often not involved in the development of tourism. Local populations and indigenous peoples should benefit the most from, and play a leading role in, tourism development, and must always have the right of prior informed consent. Efforts should be made to preserve local and indigenous cultures while upholding the commitment to human rights.

31. Civil society recognises the important contributions to sustainable tourism made by the World Tourism Organization and UNESCO. The sound environmental practices carried out during some recent mega-events like the Olympic Games should be applied to other large sporting and entertainment events that draw large crowds of tourists.

32. Civil society urges all Governments to take the following national actions:
- a) Ensure integrated planning that adequately addresses tourism within national sustainability strategies by applying the precautionary principle based on the natural and social carrying capacity of the areas where tourism takes place, and by carrying out and publishing sectoral and regional environmental impact assessments (EIAs), including the ecosystem approach of the Convention on Biological Diversity.
  - b) Apply precaution in opening up their tourism markets and agreeing to progressive liberalization in the service sectors presently being negotiated under the World Trade Organization (WTO), recognising that the influx of international tourism operators could displace local entrepreneurs and affect livelihoods.
  - c) Ensure cooperation among ministries in promoting sustainable tourism, and strengthen enforcement and monitoring capability on environmental legislation as it relates to tourism.
  - d) Adopt and implement in a streamlined manner sustainable tourism certification and reporting schemes, such as the Green Globe and the Global Reporting Initiative, with the goal of increasing accountability and promoting consumer support and action. Governments should publicly and regularly report on outcomes of their streamlining efforts.
33. We call upon Governments to take the following actions at the international level:
- a) Specify and agree on measures to address climate change in the tourism sector at CSD-14 in 2006 and 2007 when climate change will be on the agenda. All actors in the tourism industry should explore decreasing and offsetting carbon emissions from civil aviation related to tourism.
  - b) Recognize the impact of tourism on the mandates of various UN agencies, for example UNDP's Poverty Alleviation Programmes, and call for greater coherence and coordination among organizations and agencies within the UN system regarding issues related to tourism. In this respect we believe that tourism can play a positive role in promoting "zero waste" strategies, reduced energy consumption, especially for travel, and other sustainable development benefits.
34. We request UNEP and the GC/GMEF to take the following actions:
- a) UNEP should convene a meeting of Ministers of the Environment and Tourism, along with their counterpart country representatives to the World Tourism Organization, to review issues of tourism and the environment.
  - b) The Governing Council should ensure that increased and adequate funding is available to allow UNEP to carry out activities related to tourism and the environment in its Programme of Work.



## **D. Conclusion**

35. Civil society stands ready to work closely with UNEP and all Governments to face the complex challenges posed to sustainability on our planet. We request Governments, especially of developed countries, fully to honour their promises in Millennium Development Goal 8, particularly as they relate to export market access for developing countries, development aid, and debt relief. We call upon all Governments and stakeholders from all sectors to join in a common effort to ensure a better, safer world for present and future generations.