

Business and Industry text submissions regarding the enhancement of Major Group engagement in the work of UNEP

Nairobi, 4 February 2007

Business and Industry appreciates the initiative of the Major Groups and Stakeholder Branch of UNEP to improve the mechanisms for civil society engagement at the governance level, including the Global Civil Society Forum process. From our perspective, there are some important ways the new GCSF cycle could be improved and we look forward to working with our partner major groups to do this.

- With regard to the Civil Society Global Steering Committee composition, we suggest that the current membership be enhanced by one dedicated seat per unrepresented Major Group, but leaving it to each to nominate their representative according to their internal governance processes.
- Given the mandate and resources of UNEP, we support its focus on networks of organizations, particularly those at global and regional levels. We appreciate the value of regional consultations as part of UNEP's outreach, but we would like to stress the wealth of expertise and networks contributed by the globally mandated organizations of some Major Groups, which are not fully harnessed through regional processes alone, as became clear in the drafting of this year's Global Civil Society Statement.
- We appreciate the efforts undertaken by the Global Steering Committee to draft this year's Global Civil Society Statement. We emphasize the need to incorporate a comment period in future years on any draft statement before it is finalized and suggest that online technology might help to facilitate such a comment process. The technology underpinning social media is evolving rapidly. Although digital coverage is imperfect, its reach is far greater than any physical meeting ever can be. And many technologies are now extremely affordable. UNEP is encouraged to make innovative use of communication technology in order to widen participation in events and consultation processes.
- UNEP may want to consider maintaining expert rosters within the civil society database and seeking feedback from relevant groups on specific policy issues. The new civil society database should be powerful enough to allow groups to choose their areas of interest/expertise in their profile. These could then be the basis of more in-depth virtual consultations and ad hoc advisory meetings.
- It would be extremely helpful for civil society if there was greater transparency about which UNEP representative to contact for specific issues. For example, staff contact information could be included on the cover page of all draft documents.
- It is not just the number of accredited CSOs that counts, but how many constituents they cover. For example, there are only 15 business and industry organizations accredited to UNEP, but they each have internal structures to accommodate for the representation of geographic and other internal constituencies.