

## UNEP Governing Council 26<sup>th</sup> Session – Item 4 (b) Emerging Policy Issues NGO Statement on International Environmental Governance

Thank you to the Chair.

On behalf of NGOs, I would like to make the following four points:

First, we encourage governments to reinvigorate their efforts to establish National Sustainable Development Councils.

Second, UNEP should be upgraded and strengthened to a specialized agency with universal membership.

Third, Governments should support a formal declaration promising to implement the recently adopted Bali Guidelines on rights to information, public participation and access to justice, and support development of national legislation in these areas.

Fourth, further progress in the development of international environmental law is needed.

I will elaborate briefly on each of these points.

First, we encourage governments to reinvigorate their efforts to establish **National Sustainable Development Councils** as this was first an agreed outcome of Agenda 21 in 1992 and repeated in 2002 at WSSD with a timeline for fulfillment in 2005. We urge the governments complete this implementation as a prioritised follow-up to Rio 2012.

Second, we firmly believe that an effective institutional framework for sustainable development requires a strong and functional International Environmental Governance, which allows democratic and equitable participation of countries of every region and of civil society major groups and stakeholders. Furthermore, such governance should be anchored in a high level authoritative organization, with appropriate administrative and political autonomy, supported by predictable and reliable resources. To accomplish these objectives, we urge governments to propose that, as an outcome of Rio+20, **UNEP should be upgraded and strengthened to a specialized agency with universal membership**. This aligns with the results of the thorough consultations and studies performed as part of the Nairobi-Helsinki process as the most reliable, timely and cost-effective approach.

Third, **Principle 10 of the Rio declaration** signed at the first Earth Summit acknowledges the critical role that citizens play in achieving sustainable development by having a voice and seat at the table in environmental decision-making at all levels of society. There is also a human right to access to information, in connection with the human right to freedom of expression. Many countries have made significant progress in establishing rights to information, public participation and access to justice, but much remains to be done. Rio +20 offers an opportunity to revive political commitment and review progress to date on this fundamental principle. **Governments should support a formal declaration promising to implement the recently adopted Bali Guidelines putting a program of work in place and appropriate funding to support development of national legislation especially in developing countries**. There is a further opportunity to support a declaration promising to work for either a global Principle 10 convention or to support regions which are ready to set in motion the process of negotiation of regional instruments that aspire to or exceed the standards of the Principle 10 guidelines, taking into consideration providing better access to information for the poor and vulnerable peoples.

**Finally, further progress in the development of international environmental law is needed.** New and existing Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) will thrive only if UNEP dedicates resources to

enhanced harmonisation between the MEAs. In implementation of MEAs, developing countries face constraints with respect not only to financial resources but also to accessing long term financing. GEF could support strong funding mechanisms not only for reporting on MEA compliance but also for MEA implementation programs and the development of appropriate institutional frameworks, technical and legal resources to ensure domestic implementation. These constraints are long overdue to be addressed. Long term capacity building programs, mentoring, and specific development of in-country or regional expertise, model laws and increased monitoring and evaluation of plans are needed to be coordinated by a strengthened UNEP.

Delivered by: Neth Dano, ETC Group