

Final Statement and position on Stakeholder Engagement Policy

Major Groups and Stakeholders and Regional Representatives

OECPR February 2016

Final Statement:

Thank you, Chair.

I am Brian Aberi, MG Children and Youth, and I am delivering this intervention on behalf of all Major Groups and Stakeholders and Regional Representatives except Business and Industry.

We are a visible reminder to delegates of all the people who will be affected by the decisions made by member states at UNEA. We are not here for ourselves, but for those who otherwise might not be heard. We are here because we believe UNEP is crucial for the wellbeing of peoples and planet.

A critical issue for UNEA-2 is the Stakeholder Engagement Policy. While we recognize progress has been made, we are disappointed that Member States have yet to deliver on their Rio+20 commitment. We are opposed to proposals that curtail accreditation on the basis of a no objection, silent veto, that threatens to exclude a just representation of major groups. Any formulation of this policy should progress and not regress from existing practices at UNEP, in the spirit of Rio+20. It is time to overcome the political deadlock. Furthermore, in whatever process takes place between now and UNEA, the Member States should ensure the meaningful involvement of the Major Groups.

We offer eight comments on the proposed UNEA-2 Resolutions under the UNEA theme of *“The environmental dimension of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda”* and we will upload a longer statement to the UNEA portal.

First, we strongly insist that these resolutions include language on gender equality and women’s rights.

Second, a crucial element of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda is practical concern for the rights, livelihoods and well-being of indigenous peoples, especially those who practice traditional occupations that conserve and sustain habitat and biological diversity. This concern is not adequately represented in the proposed resolutions.

Third, the implementation of these resolutions requires a huge increase in human capacity for sustainable development at local, national and regional levels. The only way this will happen is through improvement of education.

Fourth, Small Island Developing States have special and differential environmental needs. We call for specific efforts to ensure these needs are reflected in the resolutions.

Fifth, UNEA-2 should provide substantial inputs to the development and implementation of the New Urban Agenda that will be agreed at Habitat III, as in October 2016 the 3rd UN Conference on Human Settlements, called HABITAT III, will take place and will focus on the New Urban Agenda. We strongly encourage OECPR to include a specific agenda at UNEA-2 that will enable Ministers and environment community to provide substantial inputs in the preparations of the HABITAT III, with a view to preserve and improve the environmental dimension in this agenda. Engagement of UNEA will provide value contributions to the global consultations on the New Urban Agenda. This is extremely important and essential considering the urgency and transformative potential of sustainable development of cities, regions, and territories, as well as many cross-cutting issues between UNEP and UNHABITAT pursuant a SDG on sustainable cities, joint Agendas, Headquarters and Committee of Permanent Representatives and the already active engagement of UNEP in the Policy Units and Thematic Preparations.

Sixth, in line with the Montevideo IV Program on Environmental Law, we call upon the member states to effectively enforce and implement international law concerning the use of natural resources, particularly freshwater.

Seventh, we are very concerned about the social and environmental implications of war and conflicts and we request member states to address their negative environmental impacts.

Finally, and crucially, in order to implement the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda, we must change the development paradigm that is focused on unlimited economic growth, which is incompatible with planetary boundaries and the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. The current economic and financial system is one of the root causes of increasing inequalities of wealth, power and resources. We insist on consumption and production patterns that uphold global environmental justice and corporate accountability.

As we depart from Nairobi today, we take with us the memory and example of Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Maurice Strong for their service to our world.

We encourage you to open UNEA-2 with a gesture of respect to Mother Earth and all of her children, acknowledging our need to live differently and reminding everyone present of the larger responsibilities we all share toward a sustainable future.

Thank you.

On Stakeholder Engagement Policy:

All Major Groups and Regional Representatives wish to thank the President of UNEA for her relentless efforts to facilitate a dialogue on stakeholder engagement. While much progress has been made, we are concerned that *still* there are certain key points outstanding.

We must recall the commitment of Member States in the Rio+20 Outcome Document to upgrade and improve UNEP on the basis of effective engagement with civil society. At UNEA-1 all Major Groups came together to express our deep disappointment at the lack of agreement on this issue. We also expressed our fervent hope that UNEA-2 would positively resolve this issue.

Positive resolution on the Stakeholder Engagement Policy means actual progress from existing practices at UNEP. We should recall Rio+20 para 88 (h), which emphasizes the importance of “exploring *new* mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society.”

Positive resolution definitely means no regression. We are particularly opposed to proposals on accreditation that would exclude major groups on the basis of a no-objection, silent veto. Instead, accreditation procedures should be open, transparent, and based on clear criteria. A veto cloaked as no-objection is a denial of evidence-based decision making, and moreover it would unreasonably curtail the plurality of voices that are necessary to strengthen the new UNEP.

The Stakeholder Engagement Policy is an issue of key importance to UNEP as an inter-governmental forum. The UN Environmental Assembly must take heed from the positive developments and good practices in other UN spaces and not lag behind. If the UN Environmental Assembly is to become the environmental voice of the United Nations, it cannot afford to discount its engagement with civil society.

A strengthened Stakeholder Engagement Policy seems to be very close. As always, all Major Groups stand ready to offer constructive conceptual and textual contributions to making meaningful and effective stakeholder engagement a reality at UNEP.

Thank you