

Europe Regional Major Groups and Stakeholders Messages to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its eleventh special session

The UNEP Regional Consultations meeting for Europe provided an adequate platform to discuss and contribution to the preparations for the next GMGSF and GCSS.XI/GMEF).

Having discussed the themes for the GCSS.XI/GMEF including: International Environmental Governance and Sustainable Development, the Green Economy, Biodiversity and Ecosystems, and enhancing synergy among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (the Extraordinary COP – ExCOP), put forward the following recommendations:

With respect to enhancing synergy among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (Extraordinary COP - ExCOP)

1. Took note of the fact that civil society organizations had not been invited to participate in the activities of the AHJWG (Ad Hoc Joint Working Group) on Enhancing Cooperation and Coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions) for the Ex Cop, major groups felt that the decision not to have observers involved was guided by other considerations, the fact that civil society was excluded from the process altogether was considered a mistake, and resulted in little understanding (and probably even misunderstandings) and contributed to building serious suspicion and defiance towards the process.
2. For the initiative of the AHJWG to be successful, it is important to understand the value of involving civil society in the process, and recommend that civil society is closely associated with the project and its activities in the future. Process rules will in any case be respected, and trust between the various stakeholders and parties to the process, paramount to the success of the project will be ensured.

General NGO concerns about the process:

3. As regard Joint managements, the major groups would initially support a project likely to enhance synergies and process efficiency. They pointed however to two aspects which must be given due attention when preparing further plans: The recast of management procedure will undoubtedly impact in one way or another, the mechanisms of public participation. It would be imperative to make sure when making plans for joint management, to emphasise public participation (therefore funding of NGO participants' travel and accommodation costs is essential in order to ensure they will be able to participate).
4. With regard to joint activities and services, the major groups would welcome such an idea. They would however like to remark on a few concerns in relationship to the process. As was noted during the consultative meeting, each of the three conventions has its own internal mechanisms, and services with their own strong and weak points. The major groups would express their concerns that the development of joint activities and services could lead to harmonizing the procedures, mechanisms and efficiency of the various instruments on the basis of the weakest of the three instruments. The process should bring about a review of outdated decision-making processes like the consensus voting in Rotterdam Convention which leads to a dead lock).
5. Welcome the proposed joint UNEP/FAO evaluation, and such a process might be helpful to allay major groups' concerns, provided it's prepared in a transparent way. It is crucial that the projects proposed Terms of References mention the role for, and consultation with, major groups and relevant stakeholders during the review.
6. The synergy process should be used as a good opportunity to update the lists of wastes under the Basel Convention and also to improve and update the governing processes of the Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions (e.g. the consensus voting in the Rotterdam Convention)
7. The synergy process will also promote the 'one window approach' at national level to strengthen cooperation and collaboration between the focal points of the three conventions
8. This process should be used to strengthen the funding base and efforts for the work of the three conventions (including NGO participation) that are underfunded currently.
9. This process should also be taken as an opportunity to broaden synergy (Cooperation and Coordination) with other MEAs of overlapping or interrelated issues such as CBD or CC.

With respect to International Environmental Governance and Sustainable Development:

1. Civil society has always been concerned with and deeply committed to improve International Environmental Governance and the meeting welcome all the work being done on this area by UNEP, and

express support for the ongoing interest and work to improve the modalities and processes constituting core elements of IEG. The work on IEG should not only be confined to UNEP, but work on this area must relate to the entire United Nations system.

2. Stress that there are basic principles that IEG must rest on and always make utmost efforts to operationalise. These are the basic principles of Good Governance, of which three are crucial in any context: participation, transparency and accountability. Of equal importance is the principle of access, as expressed, inter alia, in principle 10 of the Rio Principles.
3. Efforts must be made to ensure participation of and transparency for major groups in international governance. In the recently organised COP 15 the organisers decided to close all negotiating meetings to civil society violated this basic principle of access and should not be repeated.
4. Have noted with special interest the initiative taken through the process initiated in Belgrade in June 2009, followed up by the second in Rome, called the first and second meetings of the Consultative Group of Ministers or High-level Representatives on International Environmental Governance, and followed up through several other meetings.
5. Fully appreciate the need to have a small group of people at Ministerial level to work on IEG, but also knowing that civil society is the biggest group to be affected by IEG systems, strongly urge this initiative to include as active members representatives from major groups. Establishing an advisory body on IEG, consisting solely of members from the major groups would also be a way for civil society to contribute to developing the work on IEG.

With respect to Rio plus 20 summit (or UNEP plus 40):

6. Welcome wholeheartedly the decisions by the General Assembly of December 21, 2009, (A/C.2/64/L.59), to organise a Summit on Sustainable Development at the highest possible level in 2012, and we have taken note of the suggested thematic agenda for the summit. We have also taken notice of the many times MGs are specifically referred to and mentioned in the resolution text, including in the context of the preparatory meetings, regionally and globally.
7. We would strongly urge members of the intergovernmental community in general, and UNEP in particular to make sure the voice and presence of the Major Groups are fully integrated in the preparatory work as well as the summit itself, using all principles of good governance referred to earlier in this document as a minimum standard.
8. The standards of access, participation etc must not be made lower than they were during the two previous summits, the one in Rio in 1992, the UNCED and the one in Johannesburg, the WSSD in 2002. On the contrary these standards should be seen as absolute minimum standards.
9. We urge UNEP to make use of the opportunities to synergise efforts in preparatory work for the 2012 Summit at all levels between the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and UNEP, utilizing the opportunities that offered by the almost similar organisational setup around the MGs between the two said UN entities to assure maximum participation of major groups in the preparatory work for the Summit.
10. The experience, efforts, thinking and analytic capacities of the major groups should be recognised and substantially involved also in the development of themes under the caption 'emerging issues' and in the development of process and modalities for the summit as well as in the other areas of the summit agenda, inter alia in 'assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development' such as for instance in revisiting, and upgrading national sustainable development indicators and index etc

With respect to Biodiversity and Ecosystems:

1. Raising awareness and capacity building on national, regional and local levels about the biodiversity issues, such as CBD, etc.
2. To encourage efforts of national, regional and local governments to enforce biodiversity policies in order to protect and halt the loss of biodiversity. There is a problem of compliance/implementation of existing international and national legislation of biodiversity as well as reinforcement the coherence with other policies on water, agriculture, climate change, land management etc.
3. Better involvement of local people (like indigenous peoples, farmers, people engaged in small-business) in the preservation of biodiversity. Using traditional knowledge in the environment protection and recognizing this knowledge at global level as well as rewarding and creating incentives for local people of making efforts of preserving biodiversity and providing eco system services.
4. To ensure synergies with other policy areas such as climate change, green economy, chemicals, trades, etc. without losing the biodiversity protection.

5. To increase efforts on research on biodiversity inventories, collection and exchange of good practices and measures to preserve and increase the biodiversity.
6. One of the pillars of the Green Economy should be the ecosystems approach with biodiversity protection and enhancement as a priority.
7. National Governments should develop strategies for green infrastructure and ecological connectivity, and integrate these with policies on landscape and spatial planning. UNEP working with stakeholders within the UN system and with civil society should have a role in preparing guidelines on green infrastructure for national governments.

With respect to the Green Economy:

1. Green Economy Initiative should not become an excuse for « business as usual” scenario by just adding word “green”; In order to stop abusing the term “green economy” which could end with “greenwash economy”, UNEP needs to define term “green economy” and all terminology associated with it
2. Indicators for Green Economy should be developed and standardized at international level in order to measure progress and compare among countries
3. Green Economy Initiative should be coordinated with other UN initiatives and processes, especially those related to Sustainable Consumption and Production (Marrakech process, CSD 18/19 etc.)
4. Economical indicators based on growth and quantity (like GDP) should be supplemented with social and environmental indicators based on quality in order to measure real impact of Green Economy
5. Different economical sectors should be assessed and then agreed what is meant by Green Economy initiatives in these subsectors
6. There should be an opened debate about ethics and fundamentals of economical model which is based on growth while eco-system and natural resources are limited (degrowth etc.)
7. Link between green Economy and biodiversity should be strengthened (total nature capital, ecosystem services etc.)
8. Green labels and certificates should be internationally standardized and their application should be controlled to avoid abuse but should allow for regional and local adaptation to meet specific needs.
9. Polluter Pays Principle and Consumer Pays Principle should be implemented
10. Governments have to abolish perverse subsidies and have to improve taxation policies in order to internalize external costs and make conditions easier for green businesses
11. Governments and UNEP should at national level and global level include all nine major groups in development of Green Economy initiative because each one has added value and a specific and active role in realizing this process.
12. Education and training have to be provided on Green Economy for businesses, policy-makers and consumers