

European Regional Statement to the Ninth Global Civil Society Forum and the Tenth Special Session of UNEP's Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environment Forum.

Geneva, Switzerland, 31 October – 2 November 2007

The representatives of major groups of civil society¹ focused their deliberations on the Strategic Direction of UNEP, in particular the six cross-cutting priorities and objectives outlined in the Medium-term Strategy for the Period 2010-2013 where UNEP can exercise environmental leadership in the areas of Climate change, Disasters and conflict, Ecosystem management, Environmental governance, Harmful substances and hazardous waste, and Resource efficiency – sustainable consumption and production.

Within the context of the Medium-term Strategy, the following key messages have been put forward.

1. Climate change

UNEP is uniquely placed to help global society meet the climate challenge by taking a leading role in work to develop a low carbon infrastructure and economy.

These messages of the ROE civil society meeting underscore the key issues and areas where UNEP can make a difference

- **We call on all industrialized economies (Annex 1) countries to respect Kyoto Protocol and to agree on a strong Post-Kyoto commitment, reinforced by voluntary measures from developing countries, so as to ensure serious and long-lasting reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.**
- **We encourage public investment to support a long term shift in energy policy, towards sustainable and labour intensive solutions. We do not consider nuclear energy should be proposed (taken) as a solution for the climate change problem.**
- We urge measures to be put in place i.e. mitigation measures to reduce GHG emissions with special focus on energy efficiency and conservation, promotion of public transport, sustainable building, and waste reduction. The success of implementation strategies will largely depend on public policies and national regulations. Public engagement with national efforts to address climate change can be built through green job creation, combined with re-employment programmes, training and education,
- **We demand that all major financial programmes and investments are designed and operated in ways that ensure that developments both within and outside the wider European region minimise carbon emissions, help to address adaptation and deliver mitigation measures.** The de-coupling of investment, growth and energy consumption must be seriously addressed. The example of structural funds within the expanded EU clearly highlights how economic growth can too easily result in concomitant increases in GHG emissions.
- We call for greater coherence between the many agencies and institutions, involved in development assistance, including the UN, so that development gains are not eradicated by climate change impacts.
- **We demand that Governments properly address adaptation. There is a need to ensure long term investments and fiscal mechanisms both in developed and developing countries in areas such as**

¹“Civil society participants strove for consensus in reaching our conclusions. Nonetheless, this statement should not be interpreted as meaning that every member of the Global Steering Committee, or civil society organization, necessarily endorses every point contained in the statement or the concept of the statement itself.”

health, water, and infrastructure. Governments also need to invest strategically in efforts for a proper understanding of the challenges and changes needed to address climate change across all sectors of society. We urge them to maintain coherent positions in all negotiations.

- **Governments should ensure that groups within civil society are fully and transparently engaged in all decision making and implementation processes with regard to tackling climate change.**
- The transition to a low carbon economy needs also to address the requirement of diversification to support economies that are currently highly dependant upon the production and processing of fossil fuels.

2. **Disaster and Post-Conflict Management - Working Group**

- Further development and functioning of disaster (and early warning) management system in region (sub-regions) is important
- Post-conflict should take into account post-conflict sustainable development strategy and implementation (e.g. South Eastern Europe)
- Environmental Security remain UNEP's priority and preferably considered as cross-cutting and/or energy security and climate change issues.
- Introducing Child Focused Disaster Reduction in Schools in disaster prone areas.
- Introduction of rainwater infiltration, use and management in rural and urban areas as a mitigation policy in disaster prone areas and in post conflict situations.

3. **Ecosystem Management**

1. **[Ecosystems services and valuation]** Their outcomes and impacts are poorly and narrowly explained beyond international rhetoric. Political and public awareness of ecosystem services' benefits does not exist in any adequate manner.
2. **[Capacity building]** Communication, Education and Public Awareness [CEPA] is a recurring UN theme that is given little but lip service. There has been no effective follow up to the Bali Declaration by UNEP or other UN-mandated agencies in this area. CEPA must be given priority in all UNEP and UN themes.
3. **[Audience]** UNEP should focus its messages well outside the environmental community to achieve effectiveness.
4. **[Management]** Successfully managing ecosystem resources necessitates priority in data and assessment [accurate and adequate inventory, monitoring and evaluation]. Otherwise, impacts to the ecosystems and how their performance will continue or be predicted to change will not be correct. Today broad general principles are commonly applied without scientific basis as to the specific ecosystem setting being adequately characterized and assessed.
5. **[Traditional local knowledge and practices]** Historical methods and understanding in ecosystems management needs more recognition and should be clearly identified, continued and adapted.
6. **[Local community and local government]** Local entities' involvement in ecosystem management is essential yet UNEP has seemingly remained unable to substantively engage with these actors in their global programs. Their absence from UNEP's outreach is a critical missing aspect of UNEP's involvement with the nine major groups.
7. **[Biodiversity conservation]** This concept is the basis for maintaining ecosystem values which can importantly influence and support sustainable development and community well-being. Despite this excellent concept, the implementation strategies for society to obtain the benefits from "Biodiversity

Conservation” have not been sufficiently applied or demonstrated. This aspect could be reinforced and strengthened by UNEP as an integral component of ecosystem management.

4. Environmental Governance

We would welcome a stronger, more effective and more efficient UNEP.

To achieve this we recommend:

- Universal country membership
- Predictable and adequate funding through mandatory assessments from members

- Greater presence of UNEP at a national level, including strengthening the National Committees to carry out the following:
 - Raise awareness of environmental issues and UNEP among the public on a country level.
 - Lobby governments to mainstream environment into national development policy planning and implementation processes.
- Ministers in addition to Environment Ministers attend intergovernmental UNEP meetings.
- UNEP should initiate new Multilateral Environmental Agreement negotiations and improve co-ordination among existing MEAs to increase effectiveness.
- UNEP should initiate its own debate on the relationship between environment and trade.
- More effective civil society representation.

At the Regional Consultation Meeting in November 2007, civil society groups were asked to give an input to the UNEP Medium Term Strategy, though the existing draft of the Medium Term Strategy was not provided. In future it would be helpful for civil society to be sent relevant drafts or documents prior to the Regional Consultation Meetings to allow for meaningful engagement and comment. This will allow for enhanced representation of civil society views at the Governing Council.

6. Sustainable Consumption and Production-Resource Efficiency

Sustainable Consumption and Production should be the core issue by itself. Resource efficiency is a sub aspect of it. Especially it does not include the concept of fairly sharing the common global resources (Resource Equity). Therefore specific and separate attention is required regarding social equity and environmental justice.

As agreed in Agenda 21, “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.”²

Sustainable Consumption and Production should include the following elements:

- Production
 - Life Cycle thinking
 - Short production chains
 - Less packaging and environmental friendly low-cost recyclable packaging

- Consumption
 - Individual and collective lifestyle changes

² Agenda 21, Chapter 4, par.4.3.

- Sustainable levels and patterns of consumption
- Investments
 - Socially and environmentally friendly practices
- Distribution
 - Balancing monetary and material flows as regards trade and transportation
 - Limiting the percentage of the product cost allowed to be used for advertising
 - A “Code of Conduct” for advertising referring to social and environmental norms

Additional important elements are

- Ecological fiscal reform
- Targetted CEPA Programmes for both Sustainable Consumption and Production³
- Well documented corporate responsibility and accountability requirements
- Information and public participation for Sustainable Consumption⁴

Process:

Further considerations should be given as to how better to support grass root organizations (youth groups etc.) that can be highly effective in initiating changes in lifestyle and thinking.

³ The elements are expressed in the NGO Ostend Statement towards Sustainable Consumption and Production prepared for the First European Stakeholder Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production within the Marrakech Process
(http://www.eeb.org/activities/sustainable_development/NGO-Ostend-Statement-24-11-2004.pdf)

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