

Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Statement to the Ninth Global Civil Society Forum and the Tenth Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum

Monterrey, Mexico, 12 - 14 October 2007

Our greetings and recognition to the environmental authorities and organizations of the state of Nuevo León, as well as the Municipalities of Monterrey and Bustamante, for the warm welcome they extended to our delegations and their important contribution to building sustainable development. We also express our most sincere thanks to the Universidad Autónoma de Nuevo León, the Universal Forum of Cultures 2007 and the Sustainable World Foundation.

Considering,

1. That a very positive step is the fact that for the first time the Declaration of the UNEP Regional Forum for Civil Society of Latin America and the Caribbean, which took place in Monterrey, Mexico, from 12 to 14 October 2007, will be presented as the first item on the agenda of the Sixteenth Forum of the Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean.
2. That the outputs obtained through the five-year assessment of the Latin America and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC) show that, although some specific variables have undergone improvement, many environmental problems of the region not only persist but have even increased and become more complex.
3. That it is important to underscore the advances made in the past five years in the field of generating information, which has translated into numerous national reports on the state of the environment and GEO overall environmental assessments; understanding, however, that advances in citizens' access to and appropriation of such information are still lacking.
4. That the lack of data for preparing some relevant indicators to measure our degree of progress towards the ILAC objectives should not be seen only as a barrier, but also as an indicator itself, and that this information should be of use for decision making.
5. That there are significant differences between the realities of our countries.
6. That although the priorities originally established for the ILAC continue being valid, concerns expressed in this Forum indicate that major groups perceive emerging issues that must be incorporated into the Initiative.
7. That the problem of climate change is of a global scope and therefore requires a collective response. At the same time, scientific evidence is sufficiently sound and economic assessments warn us that the cost of not taking action may be higher than the cost of preventive measures.
8. The message issued by the 80 heads of State who participated in the special event on climate change convened by the Secretary-General of the United Nations last September in the framework of the General Assembly regarding the need to enter into multilateral cooperation agreements that are fair and equitable for all countries,
9. That in the period 2010-2013, UNEP will, for the first time, have a medium-term strategy, which will, in principle, focus its work around six priority themes: climate change, ecosystem management, hazardous substances, natural disasters and post-conflict situations, energy efficiency and environmental governance.
10. That the United Nations system is in a period of testing a strategy to integrate its programmes under one umbrella, which implies one office, one budget and one leader, called "One UN".

11. That the document “Guidelines to improve the participation of the principal groups at the governance level of UNEP” seeks to motivate greater regional balance and representation among the new principal groups, recognizing that they have common interests, as well as individual interests.
12. That the long-term Strategy for the participation of youth in environmental issues, known as the TUNZA Strategy, indicates that UNEP will organize, support and facilitate the participation of young leaders in the sessions of the Governing Council of UNEP; and, at the same time, will establish a Tunza Advisory Council to represent youth at the Governing Council sessions to provide coordinated inputs on behalf of youth.
13. That the organizations gathered here look favourably on the efforts being made by UNEP to establish increasingly more effective mechanisms for such participation.

We declare,

Advances in the implementation of the Latin America and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development (ILAC)

14. That we are concerned about the results of the ILAC follow-up and assessment report and we understand that efforts to attain its objectives should be expanded. This leads us to rethinking our development model, with firm and active State intervention in social management and market control.
15. That, in the framework of the ILAC, a participatory communication approach giving priority to local spaces should be adopted so that citizens may know about this Initiative and adopt it as their own in order to actively and constructively participate in its definition, follow-up and implementation.
16. That we are committed to collaborating in the dissemination of ILAC and the ILAC assessment results presented to this Forum through our organizations, networks, dialogue spaces and other means available to us.
17. That there is a need to evaluate the pertinence and usefulness of the ILAC indicators in order to propose alternatives for cases in which the experience accumulated over five years indicates they do not reflect the reality and needs of our region. This process should be carried out in conjunction with civil society, comparing the relevance of indicators and the veracity of data with the principal groups.
18. That there is a need to invest in initiatives for data generation, compilation and harmonization for cases in which the indicators found to be pertinent lack sufficient statistics for their construction. The Forum specifically recommends concentrating efforts on evaluating the existence and operation of the National Councils on Sustainable Development and other similar entities for participation of the principal groups.
19. That, because of the interrelations among the issues addressed by the ILAC, it is necessary to incorporate some indicators to establish cause-and-effect relationships. This Forum specifically recommends analysing and reporting on the linkage between climate change and health.
20. That in the compiling, analysis and presentation of the advances of the ILAC it is imperative for the indicators to provide a breakdown by different sub-regions. Similar criteria should be adopted whenever possible for cases of urban and rural communities. Similarly, to gain a more realistic vision of the regional situation it is essential for the percentage values to be accompanied by their corresponding absolute numbers.
21. That this Forum considers it vital for the ILAC to incorporate, as a priority, the measurement of environmental risks and impacts of trade liberalization processes, agreements of a neo-liberal nature and infrastructure megaprojects in the region, with special emphasis on IIRSA and the Puebla-Panama Plan. We understand that these hinder sustainable development, which is why civil society is paying increasingly more attention to these efforts.
22. That we demand monitoring of the progress achieved in the field of institutional frameworks, both in terms of the consolidation of governmental environment authorities and in relation to their intersectoral links, to address the need for cross-cutting management that includes other governmental and non-governmental organizations.

Globalization and Environment: Mobilizing financing to face climate change

23. That it is important for the international community to apply the principle of common but differentiated responsibility with regard to climate change, so that those who generate the most greenhouse gases will change their production and consumption patterns, assume the weight of the compensatory measures and facilitate mechanisms to favour the prevention, mitigation and adaptation to the impacts in the countries affected, especially those that are most vulnerable.
24. That there is a need to introduce and implement political, economic, institutional, and legal reforms that will translate into improvements in energy efficiency and the development of alternative energies.
25. That we are concerned about the uncontrolled progress of biofuels, since they compete with food sovereignty and security and endanger biodiversity, forests, water, etc. and, at the same time, consolidate a production model based on extensive landholdings (latifundios) and single-crop farming, which generates agriculture without farmers and expels millions of men and women into rural migration, causing strong social and environmental tensions.
26. That it is essential to generate and strengthen alliances among the environmental and socioeconomic sectors in the framework of the National Strategies for Sustainable Development in order to implement climate change prevention, mitigation and adaptation policies and projects.
27. That it is important to analyse the barriers that have prevented this theme from being addressed in spite of the strong scientific evidence that has existed for more than a decade.
28. That addressing this problem will generate benefits that are not only environmental, but also economic and social, in terms of job creation, improved balance of payments and incentives for local industry and communities.
29. Recognize that climate change can be addressed not only in the framework of an environmental proposal but also from the perspective of development. Consequently, we declare it necessary to identify and make use of mechanisms that are alternatives to environmental compensations to finance projects to address climate change.

International Environmental Governance and the UNEP Medium-term Strategy

30. That increasing and effective participation of civil society in the UNEP decision-making bodies is of fundamental importance, that the opportunity to formulate declarations in ministerial dialogues should continue being provided and that these declarations should be included in the related reports.
31. That it is essential for the UNEP Medium-term Strategy to include mechanisms to increase the influence of national environmental authorities, principally in the countries' economy, finance and planning cabinets.
32. That it is important for this strategy to promote the decentralization of UNEP activities and, in this line, to incorporate regional initiatives such as the ILAC. For that purpose institutional strengthening of the Regional Offices is of fundamental importance, especially with regard to their capacities for dissemination and civil society involvement.
33. That it is vital to strengthen UNEP and its participation in the joint programming processes of the United Nations in the national sphere, especially in terms of "One UN" and in projects to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

"Guidelines for improving the participation of the principal groups at the governance level of UNEP"

34. That it is important to establish mechanisms to ensure that the Global Civil Society Steering Committee serves as a channel for the voices of the principal groups and that the regions express themselves at global entities in which UNEP participates through consultation and collective agenda building processes.
35. That we ask UNEP to continue supporting the efforts of civil society organizations to strengthen our capacities and consolidate our participation, all through training activities on a national and regional scale.

36. That we are interested in UNEP taking into account that the new participation models of the principal groups should improve and not endanger the space won over the years by civil society. In this framework, the Tunza Council members are selected by their peers to represent the youth of each region and their capacities should therefore be strengthened and their opportunities to participate in the meetings of the Governing Council of UNEP should be expanded.
37. That the organizations present, accredited by the GC/GMEF, are committed to collaborating with those who may decide to request their own accreditation.
38. That we request UNEP to distribute the civil society consultation documents within three months simultaneously in the official languages of the United Nations. If there is a genuine desire to incorporate the recommendations of the interested parties, it should translate into a commitment to gradually eliminate these barriers.

We wish to salute the efforts of the UNEP Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean in recognition of the experiences our organizations have gained to improve global environmental governance; and we are confident that the national environmental authorities will appropriately value and incorporate them into the related political instruments.

Finally, we reiterate the commitment of our organizations to continue contributing to the sustainable development of our societies, in a broad spirit of partnership and cooperation between civil society and governmental authorities.

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