

North American Civil Society Statement to the 24th UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum

November 22, 2006

1. This statement has been prepared by North American civil society organizations for the 24th UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) to be held in February 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya. The statement is the product of discussions that took place at the North American Regional Civil Society Consultation convened by UNEP on November 2-3, 2006 in Washington, D.C. The members of North American civil society organizations that took part in the Consultation are listed at the end of this statement.¹ This statement should be considered on its own and in support of the Global Civil Society Statement that will be distributed at the GC/GMEF. This statement contains observations and recommendations related to the four main issue areas on the agenda of the GC/GMEF: (1) globalization, ecosystem services, and human wellbeing; (2) gender and the environment; (3) water and the environment; and (4) chemicals management.

2. North American civil society organizations thank UNEP, including the Regional Office for North America (RONA) and the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch, for convening the Civil Society Consultations and the Global Civil Society Forum. We welcome UNEP's commitment to facilitating meaningful participation by civil society in UNEP activities and in international and national processes, programs, and initiatives. We commend UNEP for its inclusive and flexible understanding of participation and urge continued, expanded application of that understanding in all areas of UNEP's work program.

Globalization, Ecosystem Services, and Human Wellbeing

3. We define globalization as the increasing interdependence and inter-connectedness of people across the globe in terms of economics, the environment, and culture; and ecosystem services as the goods and services provided by ecosystems for human well-being, including provisioning, regulating, cultural, and supporting services. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) offers the international community a new decision-making framework that highlights the impacts and dependence of social and economic goals on ecosystems. The MA framework highlights the increasing interdependence of societies in a globalized world and the importance of valuing ecosystem services for the achievement of poverty reduction, climate stabilization, and the Millennium Development Goals.

4. The ability of the Earth's natural systems to provide most ecosystem services has been degraded and will likely be further degraded over the next 50 years. This trend has increasingly severe implications for human wellbeing across the world, particularly for the poor. Policies and actions that include ecosystem services should be mainstreamed into economic considerations across all sectors. The MA conceptual framework must reach far beyond the environmental community so that it is effectively incorporated in all development decisions, especially those of finance ministries

¹ Civil society participants strove for consensus in reaching our conclusions. Nonetheless, the listing of participants' names at the end of this statement should not be interpreted as meaning that every listed individual or civil society organization necessarily endorses every point contained in the statement.

and the business community. Globally, North America is a region in which disproportionately high direct and indirect drivers of ecosystem degradation loss originate. At the same time, our region holds significant technical expertise to guide the global community towards positive, sustainable economic growth, which in turn requires our region to bear political and economic leadership responsibilities.

5. UNEP is well positioned to convene national governments, international organizations including the World Bank, and non-governmental organizations to build educational awareness and develop an implementation strategy in response to the MA. To ensure success, this strategy must embrace economic growth and good governance as central components.

6. We urge UNEP, the Governing Council, and Governments to act upon the following recommendations:

Information exchange

- a) Equip environment ministers with language to educate other ministries effectively, particularly finance ministries, about the importance of ecosystem services for poverty reduction and sustainable economic growth.
- b) Support relevant ministries in preparation of their government's World Bank Country Assistance Strategies (CAS), Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), and other sustainable development papers and strategies.

Engagement with the nine major civil society groups

- c) Use key findings of the MA to engage civil society actors beyond the environmental sector to facilitate effective partnerships.
- d) Engage with the private sector and UNEP's Division of Technology, Industry, and Economics (DTIE) to bridge the frequent disconnect between the environmental community and business sector and to develop compelling arguments for incorporating sustainable development objectives into decision-making.

Analysis and tools

- e) Facilitate access to best practice and lessons learned, for example from environmental disasters such as the tsunami and Hurricane Katrina, to build awareness and promote integration of ecosystem service considerations into public and private sector decision-making.
- f) Complement existing economic and analytical studies on valuation of ecosystem services, such as pricing, with ones that consider other criteria such as regulating and cultural services and moral dimensions that can be used to leverage these values and positively influence decision-making.
- g) Support the development of ecosystem services assessment tools for quantifying ecosystem service dependence and impacts in business operations and public sector investments.

- h) Analyze the institutional and legal frameworks needed to enable markets for ecosystem services to be fully integrated into national systems.
- i) Assess the impact of global commodity trading on ecosystem services.
- j) Explore opportunities to link financing mechanisms with efforts that support restoration, maintenance, or enhancement of ecosystem services.
- k) Develop data and information gathering systems for improving awareness and training.
- l) Ensure incorporation of ecosystem services studies into UNEP's ongoing projects and initiatives.

Gender and the Environment

7. To accomplish its mission of providing leadership and encouraging partnerships in caring for the environment, UNEP must achieve gender equality in all of its policies, programs, and practices. We agree with Governing Council Decision 23/11 that gender equality is critical to ensuring environmental sustainability, and we endorse UNEP's Gender Plan of Action (Gender POA) as the best way to fulfill that decision. We commend UNEP for the appointment of a Senior Gender Advisor and believe this is a critical first step. In particular, we call on UNEP to:

- a) Fully implement the Gender POA, both in its internal and external policies, practices, and programs, including:
 - Operationalization at UNEP Headquarters in Nairobi and all UNEP regional offices, and
 - Incorporation of gender equity and equality into every sphere of UNEP's work, including the organizational, policy, delivery and constituency spheres, as described in the Gender POA;
- b) Request, and donor governments to commit, adequate resources dedicated to implement the Gender POA, including sufficient funds in a non-discretionary, fixed line of the UNEP budget, so that implementation of the Gender POA is not dependent on the existence of extra-budgetary resources;
- c) Strengthen and sustain government and civil society partnerships to implement the Gender POA, including:
 - The Network of Women Environment Ministers and civil society organizations working at the nexus of gender equality and the environment, and
 - Alliances with UN "sister" entities with expertise on gender equality and human rights; and
- d) Revise existing, and where needed develop new, evaluation tools and benchmarks of success that fully integrate gender equity.

Water and the Environment

8. UNEP's leadership in achieving implementation of the Millennium Development Goals can enhance other U.N. water-related efforts. North American civil society believes there are abundant opportunities for action using replicable international models that can lead to meaningful and measurable results in water and the environment. Canada and the United States have a century-long tradition of managing shared waters. With that tradition in mind, we call on our Governments jointly to propose that UNEP/RONA assume a leading role in support of a North American initiative to assist the developing world to build and achieve capacity in:

- a) Education, training, and raising awareness in water governance and watershed management, particularly shared watersheds, including the use of existing measures such as UNEP toolkits;
- b) Developing effective, participatory institutional water governance and management frameworks drawing on experience gained in North America;
- c) Measuring and understanding watersheds through monitoring, research, and technology development; and
- d) Delivering effective and affordable infrastructure, products, and services through accumulating, analyzing, and disseminating best practices.

9. UNEP can facilitate this process by focusing on scalable pilot projects and leveraging existing initiatives with partners (including U.S. and Canadian partners) and within U.N. agencies. UNEP should also promote public-private partnerships and alliances with the UNESCO Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, UNU-INWEH, the World Bank, WHO, OECD, IUCN, WBCSD, the Decade for Action: Water for Life, and others. Integral actors include women, communities of faith, and youth.

10. Among the enablers for UNEP's success are:

- Appropriate indicators;
- Oversight;
- "Mapping" of existing projects;
- Educational outreach; and
- Leveraging existing efforts and partnerships such as the OECD's Group of Water Senior Officials from Eastern Europe, Caucasus and Central Asia; the U.S. Partnership for Education for Sustainable Development; and the Canadian Government's sustainability education efforts.

11. In a time of increasing stress on water resources exacerbated by climate change, UNEP has a unique opportunity to facilitate knowledge exchange to effect measurable results in governance and water resources management. UNEP should assist developing countries to take practical steps to adapt to the impacts of climate change while they practice and gain experience in water resources management.

Chemicals Management

12. The North American region has a special responsibility as a major chemicals producer and consumer to behave ethically in the management of chemicals, to set a leadership example, and to avoid outsourcing or exporting harm through global trade. Elemental pollutants, especially heavy metals, pose special concern because of their permanence and potential for serious harm to future generations. UNEP must continue to play a significant role in the rapidly changing field of chemicals management by facilitating implementation of existing international chemicals agreements, by bridging gaps, and by responding to emerging issues such as nanotechnology.

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)

- a) We urge all Governments to support the SAICM Secretariat and the Quick Start Programme, and to support long-term financing strategies that will allow developing countries and economies in transition to achieve the SAICM's 2020 chemical safety goal.
- b) We recognize the progress made in some regions to implement core principles of SAICM—including precaution, substitution, no data/no market and right-to-know—and urge all industrialized countries to lead by example.
- c) UNEP and Governments should give priority to capacity building and technology transfer in support of SAICM implementation, and should facilitate full participation by civil society.

Heavy Metals

We urge the UNEP Governing Council and Governments to:

- d) Authorize development of a legally binding global instrument on heavy metals, and to explore the value of regulating heavy metals under existing multilateral instruments;
- e) Reduce mercury supply by ceasing primary mining of mercury, restricting mercury exports from developed nations, and managing mercury from the closure of chlor-alkali facilities;
- f) Establish a global mercury use reduction goal of 70% by 2017 to be achieved by ending use of mercury in electronics, batteries, thermometers, non-electronic measuring equipment, and small-scale gold mining;
- g) Take measures to reduce the demand and supply of lead and cadmium by eliminating lead in transportation fuels, promoting safer substitutes for lead and cadmium, and improving management and disposal; and
- h) Require manufacturers to assume responsibility for products throughout their life-cycle that contain hazardous metals by, for example, implementing practices identified and recommended by the UNEP/SETAC Lifecycle Initiative.

Coordination and Synergies

- i) We urge Governments and UNEP to pursue all available financial mechanisms to support sound chemicals management in developing countries and economies in transition, including the Global Environment Facility, multilateral trust funds, official development assistance, focused partnerships, private financial flows, and other mechanisms. We support expansion of the existing GEF POPs focal area so that it can support sound chemicals management projects beyond POPs.
- j) We call on UNEP to support the strengthening of chemicals management capacity in developing countries as recommended in the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building; in particular, through knowledge transfer and by drawing on underutilized resources including workers, parents, the health and scientific communities, business, and other sectors of society.
- k) We encourage UNEP to collaborate with the ILO, the WHO, and others to identify opportunities for promoting consistent protections for all people, whether in the workplace or at home, from harms caused by chemicals exposure.
- l) We urge all parties to the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions to support the listing of chemicals whenever the respective chemicals review processes for the treaties recommend their listing, including chrysotile asbestos under the Rotterdam Convention.

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