

6th Global Civil Society Statement¹ to the 23rd Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum, February 20th 2005

Background

Historically UNEP was among the first UN entities to allow the NGO community to participate in its many proceedings. NGOs were present at the very making of UNEP at the Stockholm conference in 1972. NGOs are and will always be important to UNEP. In the suggested Programme of Work for UNEP for the period 2006 - 2007, there are almost 70 references to NGOs and Civil Society in the implementation of the programme.

The fact that NGOs and other representatives of Civil Society may still be barred from some key processes and proceedings of the Governing Council is neither in tune with UNEP's historical legacy nor with the global calls for better transparency and good governance. In responding to the recent Cardoso Report on Civil Society², UN Secretary General Kofi Annan makes it a priority for the UN to be inclusive in its relationship with Civil Society.

Stressing the importance of Civil Society at the implementation level, Governments – in decision GC/SS/VII.5 adopted in 2002 – decided that UNEP's Civil Society strategy should “*provide clear direction to the secretariat to ensure that all programmes take into account opportunities for multi-stakeholder participation in design, implementation, monitoring, and dissemination.*”

Civil Society is pleased to respond to this mandate with the following statement:

Programme of Work:

Civil Society Organizations welcome the opportunity to review and comment on the UNEP Proposed Biennial Programme and Support Budget. Consideration should be given to whether and how a more user-friendly overview might make the Draft Programme of Work more accessible and easily understood. Additionally, participation in Civil Society meetings could be enhanced by providing more advanced notice before the meetings, and by providing Civil Society participants with all relevant materials at the same time that governments receive them.

The effectiveness of UNEP's Program of Work would be increased by addressing the following omissions and gaps:

- The Program of Work needs to take greater account of, and establish clear linkages to, relevant ongoing processes such as the Millennium Declaration Plus 5 Review; the CSD 14 and 15 thematic clusters of energy, air pollution and transportation; the

¹ This statement builds on the six regional statements developed during broad consultative meetings facilitated by UNEP during November and December 2004. All six regional statements are annexed to this global statement. This global statement has been drafted in the recognition that business and industry and youth groups have their own processes in place.

² Fifty-eight session, Agenda Item 59 “Strengthening of the United Nations System” (A/57/387 and Corr.1) The report is titled: “We the peoples: civil society, the United Nations and global governance. Report of the Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations,” also known as the Cardoso Report.

Johannesburg Plan of Implementation objective of halting and reversing biodiversity loss by 2010; the 10 year framework of programmes in support of regional and national initiatives to accelerate the shift to sustainable consumption and production (The Marrakesh Process); and the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development 2005-2014;

- UNEP should continue its research and impact assessments and increase its efforts to raise public awareness on the effects that armed conflicts and militarization may have on the environment and sustainable development at the local, national, regional, and international levels;
- Governments should support the further implementation of Montevideo Programme III, (Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law for the First Decade of the 21st Century) and should continue the overall process in Montevideo IV;
- UNEP, governments, and relevant Civil Society Organizations should support and expand national and regional training programmes on environmental law, including those that focus on environmental training for judges, legislators, etc.;
- UNEP should consistently promote and address at all levels the need to significantly raise the status of environmental ministries at national levels;
- We acknowledge and welcome the UNEP initiative on organising the First Women's Assembly on Environment: WAVE ("Women as the Voice for the Environment"). We underscore the outcomes of the WAVE and expect that UNEP and its partners as well as national governments and different stakeholders will play proactive roles and take concrete steps to implement the outcomes and move the WAVE process forward;
- The Programme of Work should emphasize the relationship between environment, sustainable development, and cross-sectoral issues such as poverty, food security, sustainable livelihoods, globalization, gender, health, education, and unsustainable consumption and production patterns;
- Special attention should also be paid to the particular sensitivities of the regions with a view to recognizing the value of their cultural, linguistic, and religious diversities and how they contribute to environmental protection and sustainable development.

Budget and Funding

Global military expenditures in 2004 exceeded \$ 900 billion.³ At the same time, humanity is consuming 20% more natural resources than the Earth can produce.⁴ If only governments would set aside a fraction of their military expenditures as called for in Agenda 21, Chapter 33, Paragraph 16, there would be ample financial resources to solve many of the most pressing environmental and sustainability challenges we face:

- The UNEP budget of US\$ 239m for 2006-07 is simply too low, in light of UNEP's broadening mandate, to meet the needs of dealing with the increasingly complex and growing list of global environmental challenges;
- Civil Society urges governments to re-commit themselves at GC23/GMEF to cooperate at all relevant levels in support of UNEP's mission, and for donor

³ Based on estimates from the Swedish International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), the World Game Institute, and the Global Policy Forum Report on the UN Financial Crisis. \$855,321,541,643 is the exact figure cited as global military spending from January 2004 to November 2004.

⁴ World Wildlife Fund, Living Planet Report 2004.

governments to provide the necessary financial and technical resources that such cooperation will entail;

- The voluntary indicative scale of contributions that UNEP has piloted may be a helpful initial step in dealing with UNEP's perennial budget shortfalls. UNEP should publicly distribute its analyses of successes and shortcomings of the voluntary indicative scale of contributions so that it can be meaningfully evaluated by all stakeholders;
- UNEP should explore new and additional sources of funding. These may include partnerships with the corporate sector. To the extent that UNEP may accept corporate financing, it must do so only in a fully transparent manner and under clear policies that avoid conflicts of interest and encourage corporate accountability;
- We call for establishing grants within the UNEP budget or line budget allocation for programmes to be implemented by Civil Society.

International Environmental Governance

Civil Society discussed the complexity of the IEG process and clearly favoured strengthening UNEP in Nairobi as the lead UN agency responsible for all environmental programmes and activities within the UN system. The achievement of progressive decisions on environmental and sustainable development issues sometimes requires more political will than is available to all governments. Therefore, governments must be willing to resort to majority voting when consensus cannot be reached on important issues. Additionally:

- Any reforms to the present environmental governance structure should enhance coordination and coherence, and must not increase fragmentation or duplication;
- The design of environmental policy requires clear links to sustainable development particularly in the context of sustainable livelihoods;
- Better cooperation and coordination should be established between different UN agencies, programmes, and multilateral environmental agreements;
- WTO rulings and processes must be compatible with sustainable development. The WTO should never be allowed to have the final say in matters relating to perceived conflicts between trade and the environment;
- Civil Society Organisations urge UNEP to consistently promote and fully operationalise the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration at all levels in order to ensure public participation, access to information, and access to justice in environmental matters;
- There is a need to foster stronger synergistic relationships between UNEP and its regional offices as well as other UN agencies and programmes (e.g. UNDP, UN CSD, and others). Particular attention should be given to link UNEP's work to important international initiatives and processes, such as the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, the Poverty Reduction Strategy Plans, the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, the New Partnership for Africa's Development, the Environmental Strategy for Eastern Europe Caucasus and Central Asia (EECCA), the European Union Water Initiative (EU WI) and others;

- We call for strengthening UNEP's scientific capacity for policy discussion, particularly in the programme of early warning and assessment and in assessing the impact of war and conflicts on the environment;
- The IEG reform process must not distract UNEP's and Civil Society Organisations' energy from their primary tasks of dealing with environment and sustainable development issues at the grass-roots and community levels.

Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building

Civil Society is pleased to have been a part of developing the Intergovernmental Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building (IGSP) framework from the beginning and we wish to endorse the statement made by Civil Society representatives in Nairobi on the 22 June 2004.⁵ In addition, we reiterate the following:

- IGSP should, where possible, build on existing initiatives;
- Civil Society must be regarded both as recipients and potential providers of capacity building;
- Experience and knowledge from Civil Society should be utilized at all levels;
- Capacity-building initiatives should be demand-driven and based on the needs and requests of developing countries;
- UNEP should explore new models to access existing and emerging technologies that are protected by intellectual property rights (IPRs), to make sure that they are sustainable, environmentally friendly, and do not adversely impact the environment, human health, or cultural diversity. Civil Society should be actively and adequately involved in this process;
- IGSP should recognize and protect traditional knowledge as a source of sustainable practices outside of the WTO/TRIPS system;

Civil Society and UNEP

We welcome the timely publication of the UNEP publication "Natural Allies" and hope it will contribute to invigorating the strategy for engagement between UNEP and Civil Society. "Natural Allies" describes the mechanisms, instruments, and decisions of governments and various structures within UNEP in a manner that would allow for effective engagement. Additionally:

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