

Civil Society Statement on Engagement with UNEP

1. We welcome the proposal on enhancing the engagement of civil society¹ in the work of UNEP. We wish to state categorically that the future lies with multistakeholder organisations. Unless UNEP can transform itself into such an organisation it will not be able to deliver on its promise. While there is complete consensus on the need for a civil society forum, we feel that much the modalities for establishing the forum require further consultation and deliberation among all stakeholders.
2. The engagement with civil society should extend beyond the deliberations of the GC/GMEF, and indeed, should pertain to the entire spectrum of activities undertaken by UNEP, including its regional and thematic programmes. Much of the success in pursuing sustainable development objectives has come from the energy and social commitment of civil society organisations in general and NGOs in particular. As we look to the future, the active involvement of NGOs/CSOs in actions as well as decisions will be critical to the achievement of sustainable development.
3. The civil society welcomes the proposal for more open rules on participation by civil society in the work of UNEP. We suggest the following three-tier framework to expand upon the current modes of engagement with UNEP.
 - a. Prior to the GC and GMEF and other relevant events, UNEP should facilitate meetings within and between major groups, including at the national level.
 - b. Following these meetings, a Civil Society Forum should take place ensuring the participation from all the major groups and regions, especially the south and countries in transition.
 - c. Finally, a Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue Segment should be integrated into the agenda of the GC/GMEF meeting. This dialogue should encompass all stakeholders, including governments.
4. These civil society forums should be open, diverse and be allowed to report differences as well as consensus reached.
5. The specific modalities to implement this framework should be developed by civil society in conjunction with UNEP. We particularly oppose the references in the draft decision allowing governments to nominate national networks for selecting civil society representatives.
6. The draft decision sets out that representatives of the civil society should be permitted to make an oral statement upon invitation from the President or Chairman and subject to the approval of the Governing Council. We think this is a very restrictive proposal and suggest that each major group be permitted to make at least one oral intervention and provide an accompanying written statement at the meeting of the Governing Council or the Global Ministerial Environment Forum. Moreover, representatives of the civil society should be allowed to make individual statements upon the approval of the President or Chairman.
7. To accomplish these objectives and to assure that these enhancements are available to all civil society groups that have an interest in environmental matters, we suggest that Rule 69 of the Rules of Procedure be amended and expanded from its current reference to "international non-governmental organizations" to include all major groups.
8. In order to implement these suggestions, it is vital that adequate and stable resources are allocated. In this regard, the Trust Fund may be inadequate to ensure the participation of all civil society groups having an interest in global environmental matters. In this regard, we call upon governments to commit themselves to provide financing sufficient to enhance the engagement of civil society in the work of UNEP.
9. We ask the Global Ministerial Environment Forum to take our views into consideration when making decisions on enhancing the engagement of civil society in the work of the United Nations Environment Program.

¹ For the purposes of this statement, "civil society" encompasses all the nine Major Groups as defined by Chapter 28 of Agenda 21.