

**Statement of the Fourth Global Civil Society Forum  
to the 22<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Governing Council**

**3 February 2003**

*Presented on behalf of the Forum by*

*Sr. Victor Hugo Ricco*

The Civil Society provides fresh air, action, and advice to UNEP. We have gathered from all over the world and from different major groups to share our perspectives with you delegates. We are grateful for having this opportunity, but we also believe it is time to enhance our participation in your important work for people and earth.

On behalf of the Global Civil Society Forum, I have been given the honor to present a number of ideas and demands. A comprehensive set of recommendations is being finalized and will be distributed shortly.

The Forum welcomes the Strategy Paper on **UNEP relations with Civil Society**. But the strategy *must* be implemented. Most important of all is to transfer words into action.

We want Forums to be convened prior to each Governing Council also in the future. The main ideas of participation underlined in the proposal on a Global Environmental NGO Forum must be implemented. It is also important to open a possibility for nationally based CSOs to be accredited with and by UNEP.

We also endorse the prompt creation of a CSO Advisory Panel to the Executive Director. The ED, on the basis of nominations from Major Groups, should appoint this panel.

Further, preparatory consultations on national and regional levels are needed. UNEP National Committees and Regional Offices should help in this. Regional partnership with CSOs should be given increased funding.

UNEP is lagging behind on civil society relations.

With regard to the **interlinkages between poverty and the environment**, civil society supports the adoption of the "Poverty and Ecosystems: A Synthesis of Conceptual Framework" (UNEP/GC/INF/30), to analyse the linkages between poverty and the environment, in keeping with GC Decision 21/15.

Civil Society recommends the Governing Council further examine the relationship between poverty and environment and develop a freedom/rights based approach to sustainable development and poverty reduction, in keeping with Paragraph 152 of the WSSD Plan of Implementation.

Based on UNEP's conceptual framework on poverty and ecosystems, UNEP should consider further developing understanding of the inter-linkages between poverty and environment that puts people first and recognize CSO as agents of institutional transformation. They could help formulate guidelines for policy options and responses and tools for implementation at local, national and regional levels.

In accordance with UNEP's conceptual framework, we must empower local communities by respecting, promoting and supporting the active participation of civil society in UNEP's approach to poverty reduction, using national strategies for sustainable development and poverty reduction strategies.

On **Consumption and Production Patterns**, UNEP should have the mandate to develop, facilitate, and monitor implementation of the ten-year framework of programmes to promote sustainable consumption and production, in close co-operation with the Commission on Sustainable Development. Key challenges are:

- Building clear political will and leadership at national and local level
- Enhancing multi-stakeholder involvement in decision-making processes through consumer's information
- Building capacity in developing countries to elaborate Sustainable Consumption and Production's systems that support job creation, decent livelihoods and value traditionally sustainable practices

- The development of an integrated approach for meeting human needs and key functions such as mobility, nutrition, shelter and so forth.

On the issue of **cultural diversity and environment**, we would like to emphasise that culture is not a luxury of our development, but a precondition for sustainability and that it is not a prerogative of only a minority, but fundamental to all people.

As stated in the Introduction of the World Summit on Sustainable Development Plan of Implementation, the respect for cultural diversity and human rights and fundamental freedoms is essential for achieving sustainable development.

We appreciate the work that UNEP has undertaken in this regard and strongly recommend a continued effort in the following areas:

1. We would like to propose that UNEP launch an Initiative on Cultural diversity and biodiversity and establish regional working groups to develop its work, in partnership with other institutions, such as FAO, CBD, UNESCO and UNCHR, and civil society.
2. UNEP should also consider the development of an Internet portal on local and indigenous knowledge and assess the importance of cultural diversity and biodiversity, using an ecosystems mapping model, such as the Millennium Ecosystem approach, to protect cultural diversity.

These ideas are just a few of what came up during the Forum. As said, we are grateful for having been given this opportunity to present them to you. But as was also said, if you open the windows even further and let us truly participate with hearts and minds, we promise to contribute even more to the objectives we all support.