

Statement by Jeremy Wates, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau, on behalf of the NGOs major group to the Committee of the Whole under agenda item 4 (International environmental governance)

20 February 2012 at 5 pm

Civil society participation is an important aspect of international environmental governance and yet the draft decision under discussion contains virtually no reference to it.

Two years ago in Bali, the Governing Council adopted Guidelines on Promoting National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters – for short, Principle 10. These are important guidelines, and we urge governments through this decision to commit to a robust capacity building programme by UNEP to implement the 2010 Bali Guidelines on Principle 10.

The draft decision refers in several paragraphs to multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). There is usually a broad consensus on the importance of proper implementation of MEAs but this is often not matched by a commitment to taking concrete measures that tend to strengthen implementation. We would like to refer to one particular type of mechanism which has proven particularly effective in facilitating MEA compliance, namely participatory compliance mechanisms whereby members of the public can trigger a review of a Party's compliance by an independent compliance review body. We believe that this model, which has been pioneered in Europe, can enhance the role that civil society can play in achieving better implementation of environmental law and should be promoted more widely in order to improve the effectiveness of MEAs.