

**WELCOMING REMARKS
BY
ELISABETH GUILBAUD-COX
HEAD OF COMMUNICATIONS
UNEP REGIONAL OFFICE FOR NORTH AMERICA
AT**

North American Major Groups and Stakeholders Consultation

*Tuesday, December 3, 2013
U.S. Green Building Council
Washington D.C.*

Good afternoon everyone.

On behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme, I would like to thank all of you for joining us today for our annual North American Major Groups and Stakeholders Consultation.

We are here to prepare for the Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum which will take place next June at the first ever United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in Nairobi – formerly known as the Governing Council.

Our aim this afternoon and tomorrow is to ensure your active participation in this consultation in order to promote transparency and effective civil society engagement. This process and your input in particular are great valued by UNEP.

We are very pleased to have with us Alexander Juras, Chief of UNEP's Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch. He is the compass for all of UNEP's civil society activities.

I would like to express our thanks to Roger Platt and the U.S. Green Building Council for providing the venue and for working with us to make this consultation possible.

I would also like to thank the panel members for taking time from their already packed schedules to be with us.

I would be remiss if I did not recognize Diallo Shabazz and Maggie Comstock for their invaluable contributions over the past year. As North America's regional representatives, they have set the bar very high by not only fulfilling their roles as representatives but also by engaging in a number of UNEP activities.

Regional consultations are an opportunity for UNEP to gather stakeholder input on environmental policy issues that are currently high on UNEP's agenda. The main vehicle for capturing and sharing these important regional views is the Key Messages document, which will be produced at the end of the consultation. This document will be shared with governments and other stakeholders at UNEP's UNEA on 23-27 June 2014.

As all of you know, one of the main outcomes of Rio+20 was an agreement to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals which would build on the Millennium Development Goals and form part of the post-2015 development agenda.

We are here to discuss two specific issues: 1) how to integrate environmental sustainability in the post-2015/Sustainable Development Goals process; and 2) how to improve stakeholder engagement in UNEP.

As we all know, the environment is critical to development, and we need to ensure that the environment is clearly integrated in the post-2015 agenda and the SDGs. And the environment and development communities need to work in tandem.

Stakeholder engagement is crucial to the success of UNEP's work. We look to you to help us strengthen our collaboration with Major Groups. However, we also need to strengthen our collaboration with other stakeholders in order to increase the diversity of perspectives in environmental discussions.

I have no doubt that we will gain a great deal from your knowledge and expertise, and I wish you every success in these important deliberations.

Thank you all, once again, for coming.

And now, it gives me great pleasure to hand over this meeting to the two people who have been the voice of stakeholders in North America for the past year: Diallo Shabazz and Maggie McComstock.

Diallo is Senior Director of Partnerships and Sustainability Education at the New York City Department of Education, and Maggie is Policy Analyst at the U.S. Green Building Council – the generous host of these consultations.