

Final statement by Major Groups and Stakeholders in the COW, delivered on 27 June 2014 by Peter Denton, North-American Regional Representative of major groups

Thank you, Madame President.

I speak on behalf of all Major Groups to celebrate this historic event. Ministers and delegates have engaged in high caliber discussions. There is much room for improvement, however.

We are seriously discouraged by the limited opportunities we have had to engage in key debates of UNEA, particularly the dialogue concerning stakeholder engagement.

Universal membership in UNEP should strengthen the organization, and cannot mean regression or the lowest common denominator.

We welcome UNEP's work on the Environmental Rule of Law. It lays the foundation for environmental democracy and sustainable development. We recommend UNEP further strengthen environmental governance by promoting respect for the right to a healthy environment and Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, as well as for the rights of indigenous peoples to their lands and territories.

We underscore the significance of the environmental dimension of the SDGs. As UNEP's ED has noted, the environment is in the SDGs' DNA, and we encourage ministers to amplify this message at UN Headquarters.

On Green Economy, we emphasize that it encompasses diverse perspectives on transitioning toward a paradigm of harmony with nature. Any vision of a green economy must be grounded on a human rights-based approach that ensures humanity's ability to remain within planetary boundaries.

We welcome the commitments made by Member States regarding the dramatically increasing problem of illegal trade in wildlife and timber. We welcome targeted action to eradicate supply and demand for illegal wildlife and timber products.

On chemicals, we are deeply concerned by the slow path of progress on this issue, given the risks that chemicals present for health and the environment. The ever increasing number of chemicals entering the market sharply contrasts with the limited capacity of many countries to regulate them, particularly in the developing world. There is a continuing need for adequate information on the effects of chemicals, in order to enable their sound management.

On the science-policy interface, we welcome the increased funding both for scientific research and for the dissemination of data needed for sound science policy decisions. We strongly support the multi-stakeholder consultation process toward GEO 6 and the expansion of UNEP LIVE.

To conclude, at the Open-Ended CPR in March we expressed our commitment to work with you all to make of UNEA an historic event. Failure to ensure the effective engagement of civil society is an abdication of the responsibility laid out for UNEP in Rio+20.

In our joint opening statement we observed that UNEA must be understood in the context of the dire environmental crisis facing our planet, a crisis that is pressing the boundaries of the planet's physical capacity to sustain a life of dignity for all.

Will the United Nations be capable of overcoming narrow national concerns? Will it be capable of addressing global public interests? Celebrating the historical significance of UNEA is not enough.

Thank you, Madame President.