

**Statement in the Committee of the Whole by Major Groups
Agenda Item, 5 (e) Coordination and cooperation with major groups.
UNEP/EA.1/INF/7 Contributions by major groups and stakeholders to
the UNEA, Tuesday, 24 June 2014**

Thank you, Chair. My name is Maggie Comstock. I am one of the Regional Representatives for North America to UNEP.

Annual consultations bring civil society representatives from around each of the six regions—Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, and West Asia—to in-person meetings, gathering members of civil society from all major groups and different countries. At these meetings, representatives discuss the issues that will be addressed at the UNEA, as well as others that are relevant to each region. The outcomes of the Regional Consultation Meetings are compiled into statements, which you have in front of you in UNEP/EA.1/INF/7. Additionally, representatives are nominated and two are elected for each region. They take the outcomes from the regions to the global consultative processes, including here at the UNEA.

The model plays a particularly important role in ensuring active participation of all relevant stakeholders, particularly those from developing countries. Regional representation enables and ensures balance between the Global North and South. Participation of stakeholders at this level is particularly important as the reality experienced by civil society differs greatly among the regions.

For your consideration in UNEP/EA.1/INF/7, the regional consultations have identified several priorities for UNEP, including many common priorities, such as enhanced stakeholder engagement, sustainable consumption and production and the environmental and rights-based approach to the sustainable development goals. A strengthened participation of stakeholders at the regional level will better equip UNEP to address more adequately the priorities of the people that it seeks to serve.

We are aware that the Working Party on the Stakeholder Engagement Policy has made historic progress in the wrong direction, as it relates to civil society access and participation. ECOSOC Rules must be considered the baseline for stakeholder engagement and, per the Rio+20 Future We Want document, this body is compelled to build upon them. Civil society and business are integral parts of sustainable development, and must not be excluded from the UNEP agenda-setting, decision making and implementation processes. I implore the United Nations Environment Assembly to redirect the current trajectory, to employ the principles of non-regression and to make the first session of the UNEA a historical one for the right reasons—for supporting Major Groups and Stakeholders' access to information and full participation. Major Groups and Stakeholders contribute important expertise and information on local realities—views that are not otherwise represented in this global forum.

Thank you for your consideration.