

Report of the Thematic Cluster on Science-Policy Interface
to the Plenary of the 15th Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum

22 June 2014

There are several issues of significance to Major Groups and Stakeholders in Draft Decision #5, Omnibus Decision on Science-Policy Interface. These issues also relate to the program of work and budget reflected in Draft Decisions #1 and #2. Due to the need first to seek clarification about the UNEP budget and program of work and second to learn something of the reasons for the bracketed text in Decision #5, the cluster did not as yet produce a statement or recommendations. Simply put, we need to do more research.

When this research has been completed, the Science and Technology Major Group will take the lead in drafting intervention(s) and/or statements, inviting other Major Groups and Regional Representatives to provide input and to indicate their support for the final text(s).

We do, however, have some preliminary observations and comments:

First, with respect to budget and program of work reflected in Draft Decisions #1 and #2: While we applaud the significant increase in the UNEP budget in terms of its percentage of the UN budget (reversing a trend of more than 30 years), we wonder if it is enough to enable a newly-expanded UNEP to fulfill its increased roles and responsibilities. We also wonder if the monies allocated are directed in sufficient amounts toward activities intended to increase the flow of scientific data that underpins policy development and analysis. This reflects our concern that good science be central to the work of UNEP.

Second, with respect to Draft Decision #5: We note the large amount of bracketed text and wonder whether a working group will be established to resolve the substantive issues remaining and therefore bracketed in the current draft (as of the OECPR, 28 March 2014).

Third, to highlight concerns with the bracketed text, we want to monitor the following issues on behalf of the MGS:

- a) Will the decisions taken in this omnibus be effective in increasing the amount, quality and accessibility of scientific information that is crucial to UNEP fulfilling its environmental mandate?
- b) The clarification of UNEP's role in science policy formulation, or its recommendations toward science policy formulation by member states and other actors, is essential. Some of the bracketed text suggests a purely informational role for UNEP, something that does not fit with the reciprocal nature of the science-policy interface.

- c) The importance and necessity of major groups and stakeholders' involvement with the multilateral consultation process toward GEO 6 is indicated in bracketed text. We wonder if the ways and means will be clarified as the process unfolds, or if there is a dispute as to whether or not civil society will be allowed to participate in meaningful substantive and effective ways.
- d) Similarly, language emphasizing stakeholder engagement is bracketed in the text relating to UNEP LIVE. In addition to this concern, the scope, nature and funding of UNEP LIVE and its relationship to the GEO 6 process has apparently yet to be finalized, given the brackets still remaining.
- e) Finally, given the number of tasks required of the Executive Director in this draft decision, we would return to the issue of capacity within UNEP to accomplish such tasks at the ED's direction in a timely and effective manner. Is the current funding sufficient to ensure the human and other resources required?

Depending on the results of our research and the circumstances of discussions on these issues, members of the thematic cluster will work with the Science and Technology Major Group to keep other MGS apprised of progress and any particular need for some collective intervention.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter H. Denton, Ph.D., Thematic Cluster Facilitator
United Church of Canada
MGS Regional Representative (North America)