

UNEP Civil Society Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean

Declaration/ Regional statement

24th – 25th November 2008.

Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The participants of the Regional Consultation Meeting for the UNEP Civil Society Forum for Latin America and the Caribbean, meeting during 24th – 25th November 2008, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Cecilia Iglesias, Vice Chair Mr. Gordon Bispham, and the rapporteurs Angeles Pereira, Raquel Gutierrez, Lilliana Nunez, Aldrin Calixte and Kenneth Ochoa, reflected about different topics that will be discussed during the 25th Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum to be held in Nairobi, on 16th – 20th February 2009, and decided the following.

Considering

The UNEP Medium-Term Strategy 2010 – 2013, approved during the 10th Special Session of the Governing Council, the comments submitted by the Permanent Representatives of the Committee and the draft document of the Programme of Work 2010-2011;

The UNEP six priority areas, namely, climate change; disasters and conflicts; ecosystems management; environmental governance; Harmful substances and hazardous waste; resource efficiency – sustainable consumption and production;

The mandates established by the Sixteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean; specifically Decision number 13 on Strengthening the role of Major Groups in Agenda 21;

The Santo Domingo Declaration, which affirms that International Environmental Governance must result in the improvement of environmental performance and internationally, regionally, sub-regionally and nationally the coordination and inter-relation between Multilateral Environmental Agreements;

The UN General Assembly Resolution A/HRC/7/L.21/Rev.1, advocated by the Human Rights Council, on the "Promotion and Protection of all Human Rights, Civil, Political, Social and Cultural Rights, including the Right to Development;"

The UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/60/1, which recognizes the need for a more coherent institutional framework for the environment, and the "Informal Consultative Process on the Institutional Framework for the United Nations' environmental activities;"

The Draft documents UNEP/GC/25/10 and UNEP/GC/25/INF/17 relating to the Long-term Strategy on the engagement and involvement of Youth in Environmental Issues, both documents will be evaluated by the upcoming GC/GMEF;

The existence of GEO for Youth in Latin America and the Caribbean, and its close relation to the TUNZA Strategy as promoter and implementing agency thereof;

The framework of the Marrakech Process on sustainable production and consumption, as well as the agreements developed in regional consultations, specifically in Sao Paulo (Brazil) in 2007;

UNEP's experience in performing GEO integrated environmental assessments, lessons learned during the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, and the findings and recommendations of GEO 4 on UNEP's six priority areas;

That climate change is a priority of global, regional, national and local environmental agendas, governments and agencies as well as major groups' organizations;

The advances of the agreements for the management of chemicals and hazardous wastes;

The constant increase of the region's vulnerability due to natural and anthropogenic disasters, as well as poverty;

That to date the results of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development have been extremely limited, UNEP's involvement has been low, and civil society capacities are not being used to their full extent possible;

That the provision of projected, new and additional financial resources is crucial for the promotion and implementation of environmental policies and strategies in general and specifically the Programme of Work 2010-2011;

On climate change, we request UNEP and the Governments to

- Prioritize adaptation actions in developing countries and mitigation actions in developed countries;
- Strengthen regulatory frameworks on monitoring issues, control, fines, public hearings, environmental impact assessments, and the support to local governments;
- Assure that environmental impact and vulnerability assessments relating to climate change in the region actively involve the major groups defined in Section 3 of Agenda 21, especially emphasizing the participation of indigenous peoples and small farmers;
- Promote the effective participation of major groups in research opportunities on climate change prevention, adaptation and mitigation;
- Guarantee environmental sustainability, food safety and sovereignty and access to water;
- Increase research and development of renewable energies;
- Cover aspects pertaining to the enjoyment and fulfillment of human rights and their link to the negative impacts generated by climate change; similarly, promote collaborative and articulated work within the different agencies of the United Nations System.

On disasters and conflicts, we request UNEP and the Governments to

- Focus actions on preventing disasters, with the full involvement of all sectors of society, enabling these sectors to be capable of identifying the risk factors they are exposed to, as well as the possible measures they can adopt to prevent, reduce or mitigate the consequences of such events;
- Recognize the close relationship between poverty, vulnerability and planning through the integration of programs leading to reduce vulnerability to disasters in the national development strategies and the fight against poverty, as well as in territorial planning;
- Call civil society organizations to join the network of experts in disaster prevention, response and mitigation provided for by Sub-Program 2;
- Promote the development of research to determine how man is influencing the frequency, intensity and impact of disasters, with the purpose of reducing existing uncertainty on the role of humans in its causes;
- Strengthen the early warning capacities of UNEP, governments and communities, using for this purpose better training for experts and non-experts, and more and better equipped monitoring and control centers;
- Develop risks maps with a comprehensive, cross cutting and transboundary focus.
- Focus attention and aid to Small Island States of the Caribbean, considering the risks of Climate Change, the increase of disasters and its damages to the economy, society and ecosystems.

On ecosystems management, we urge UNEP and the Governments to

- Recognize the intrinsic value of ecosystems, regardless of the goods and services they supply, through the reformulation of the objective of Sub-Program 3, to express that the purpose of the comprehensive management of ecosystems is human wellbeing and the protection of life on Earth;
- Implement the proposal of Sub-Program 3 of carrying out eco-systemic scale assessments, considering ecologic units as systems. Therefore, it is recommended to identify critical ecosystems on which

relevant uncertainties exist, significantly increase the participative nature of assessments, emphasize on the intangible services of ecosystems, and incorporate scientific as well as traditional knowledge;

- Call social movements and other organizations representing major groups in the design and implementation of comprehensive strategies for ecosystems management, including cultural awareness criteria and sector diversity;
- Promote, in being coherent with the Programme of Work, the incorporation of the ecosystem approach in education activities and capacity building, pursuant to values based on education and experiences and knowledge of civil society organizations;
- Respond to the demands that this Forum has repeatedly requested for regarding the Initiative for Regional Integration of South America (IIRSA, in Spanish) and the Mesoamerica Integration and Development Project, carrying out in both cases, comprehensive analysis mentioned in Sub-Program 3 for large-scale infrastructure projects.

On environmental governance, we request UNEP and the Governments

- Carry out the necessary efforts so that consultation processes prior to the Regional and Sub-Regional Ministerial Forums, and the Conference of the Parties of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements, be inclusive of major groups, guarantee the right to access information, reinforce communication mechanisms and promote organized participation;
- Promote effective enforcement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of indigenous peoples (A/RES/61/295) with reference to programs, projects and actions that may affect these groups, as well as Decision 15 on recognition and strengthening the participation of indigenous people, as provided for in the Declaration UNEP/LAC-IG.XVI/9;
- Strengthen strategic alliances with Insular Caribbean, particularly on the topic of conservation, taking advantage of the launching of the IUCN Caribbean Initiative.

On the management of harmful substances and hazardous waste, we demand UNEP and the Governments

- Compliance with mechanisms relating to chemicals (Basil, Rotterdam, Stockholm and SAICM) through the elimination of substances attempting against life, as well as the establishment of surcharges for polluting substances, the guarantee of the right to access information on technologies and substances, and the promotion of clean production among national stakeholders;
- Support the strengthening of education, information and communication mechanisms through research and participation, to link major groups, and collaborate with national and regional programs;
- Include and promote the inclusion of indicators on topics pertaining to the risks posed by chemicals and the consumption of chemical substances in sustainability reports;
- Include the International Trade Union Confederation as an ally for the Programme of Work 2010 – 2011 on issues pertaining to Sub-Program 5.

On resource efficiency, sustainable production and consumption,

We request UNEP to consider cross cutting issues such as fair transition, food safety and sovereignty and the right to access information, among others;

We request to link major groups in sustainable production and consumption, as well as other Communications mechanisms on these issues;

We commit to contribute with training and citizen building processes relating to resource efficiency, sustainable production and consumption, requesting therefore, the support of UNEP and the governments;

We propose to articulate work developed by UNEP, the governments and civil society with national consumer associations and individual work networks.

On the TUNZA Strategy, we demand UNEP and the Governments to

- Comply with commitments undertaken during the Sixteenth Meeting of the Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean on strengthening regional, sub-regional and national youth networks in the framework of the TUNZA and GEO for Youth Strategies;
- Assure full and effective participation of children and youth representing groups such as indigenous peoples, peasants and the disabled, in the different activities provided for in the TUNZA Strategy, attempting at the same time to prioritize those coming from developing countries and guaranteeing greater equal representation among regions;
- Modify the mechanism for the election of the Youth Advisory Council (TYAC) and the Junior Board, so that each region elects during the TUNZA International Conferences their own youth and child representatives. In this manner, the children and the youth forming part of these spaces must be voted exclusively by children of their own region, legitimizing and making the representation of those elected more sustainable;
- Assure the enforcement of the position established for indigenous youth, in addition to the representative of each region, in the TUNZA Youth Advisory Council;
- Assure adequate rotation among hosting regions for children and youth TUNZA Conferences, to guarantee greater equal participation of developing countries.
- Guarantee children and youth are empowered regionally, sub-regionally and nationally through strengthening the role of Regional Offices in the decisions and implementation of the TUNZA Strategy;
- Promote participation opportunities for children regionally and sub-regionally to identify new environmental Leaders and favor their training and transition towards youth spaces.

Issued in Buenos Aires, Argentina on 25th November 2008