

## **Key messages from the UNEP European MGS Regional Consultation Meeting (RCM) in preparations for the 15th UNEP Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-15) and First session of the United Nations Environment Assembly of UNEP (UNEA1), 4-5 November, 2013, Istanbul, Turkey**

The 2013 UNEP European Regional Consultation (RCM) with Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) was held from 4 -5 November 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey, and prior to the UN Regional Consultation on the Post-2015 Development Agenda for Europe and Central Asia held from 6-8 November 2013.

The RCM attracted UNEP accredited Major groups and stakeholders in Europe, ROE MGS partners involved in the Environment for Europe (EfE) process, the Caspian Convention, the Carpathian Convention, the Poverty and Environment Initiative, Environment and Security Initiative, the Black Sea, the Pan-European Biodiversity Platform and the European Environment and Health processes (EEHP).

The themes for the consultation included the new mechanisms for the engagement of MGS in UNEP (including UNEA), the 10 Years Framework of Programmes on SCP (10YFP), UNEP's role in the Post-2015 development agenda and SDGs and the implementation of UNEP PoW in the European region.

The following messages were put forward by the participants:

### ***On the new mechanisms for the engagement of MGS in UNEP:***

Welcomed the proposed new mechanisms for stakeholder engagement at UNEP in line with the spirit of paragraph 88h of the Rio Outcome Document;

Stakeholder contributions to UNEP should be based on local, national and regional experiences, practices and knowledge;

We support the principle of participation, meaningful engagement and access to intergovernmental processes for the afore mentioned stakeholders, as expressed in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), resolution 67/290 of July 9, 2013 establishing the High Level Political Forum, the HLPF, and further expressed in the Human Rights Covenants, the Aarhus Convention and in similar documents of equal formal standing;

We further support the construct of the major groups by the UN at UNCED in 1992 through Agenda 21 and as recognised and further resolved by the Rio 2012 Summit. Also, criteria for stakeholder engagement must be developed, using the criteria enumerated in the 1996 ECOSOC resolution 1996/31 on Consultative Relationship between the United Nations and Non-Governmental Organizations;

Within the current 'nine major groups' configuration, environmental NGOs function today as a sub-set of the NGO major group despite their specific environmental profile and expertise. In the future work of UNEP, UNEP should recognize environmental NGOs as an additional and distinct major group with a guaranteed seat and voice in UNEP processes;

In view of the 'new UNEP' as expressed in the Rio Outcome Document, the mandate for regional representatives, their modalities, functions and roles need to be further adjusted and elaborated, and relevant modalities should be developed with the assistance of UNEP to function as conveners of regional environmental networks and their activities with the representatives of major groups.

In line with practise developed at the first UN Summit in 1992, the 2002 Johannesburg Summit and some of the best practise employed by other UN relevant conferences, accreditation should be given to all interested stakeholder organisation that can prove they comply with basic standards and criteria for organisations developed and utilised by UNEP;

Major groups and other stakeholders should always be given access to the UNEA of UNEP and its subsidiary bodies including the Open Ended CPR (Committee of Permanent Representatives) as well as other CPR meetings as appropriate and when needed; and

The proposed new mechanisms for stakeholder engagement will not succeed without adequate funding. Therefore, adequate funding should be made available to ensure quality input from major groups and other stakeholders, in terms of process as well as thematic work, and to promote continued and credible engagement in UNEP-related issues.

### ***On the 10 Years Framework of Programmes on SCP (10YFP):***

Fully support UNEP's continued role and work to accelerate the shift towards sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns in both developed and developing countries;

The 10YFP will only succeed if the international context is appropriate for its implementation. Therefore, we think that the SCP agenda cannot be isolated from other global trade and market policies. As indicated in paragraph 225 of the Rio+20 outcome document harmful and inefficient consumption and production policies and incentives have adverse impacts on the environment and communities at large, and undermine efforts to make sustainable choices and achieve sustainable development;

Therefore, we strongly recommend an accelerated phase out of the unsustainable and harmful subsidies and investments in the energy, agriculture and other sectors;

We strongly recommend that the 10YFP focus on changing and transforming the unsustainable patterns of consumption and production, and going beyond promoting green consumption and production.

We would underline the importance of clearly identifying and directly addressing some of the fundamental obstacles to achieving SCP. These include a debt-based economy, which leads to GDP growth obsession and overconsumption of resources; financial, monetary and economic systems that are not appropriate to implementing SCP; and the existing "consumer blindness", leading to unrealistic consumption growth, without awareness and realization of its environmental and social consequences;

We therefore stress that technical and market based solutions will never be enough to tackle the environmental and social challenges posed by unsustainable patters of consumption and production. We need to focus on fundamental changes in lifestyles, as well as transformation of corporate value from maximizing profit to meeting social and environmental standards and responsibilities as a fundamental and legal objective;

We also caution that the SCP agenda is not only about the environment, but also about social improvements such as labour conditions and health and gender equality;

We recognize the highly energy and resource-intensive production patterns in many sectors contributing to the continued deterioration of the environment through emissions of waste, toxic materials, pollutants, and depletion of scarce resources. 10YFP should be effectively used to promote policies, incentives and actions to create sustainable production and energy patterns;

We are in favour of national and local strategies on SCP, including active stakeholder involvement, to guarantee implementation in the field. An international framework is nevertheless important, to harmonise the policies and regulations and create a level playing field. Capacity building work is also vital, especially for countries that are not very familiar with SCP policies;

We would like to see education and raising awareness on SCP mainstreamed in all programmes (including in school curricula); and

The discussion on sustainable consumption and production should be at the center of the post-2015 development agenda discussion and should also be considered as a stand-alone SDG.

### ***On UNEP's role in the Post-2015 development agenda and SDGs:***

Welcome and support the integrated approach promoted by UNEP and the discussion paper on Embedding the Environment in SDGs, and the UN Europe and Central Asia advocacy paper on “Building more inclusive, sustainable and prosperous societies in Europe and Central Asia”;

Support the need to focus on the critical global environmental challenges, especially over the next decade, as choices made within this time frame will be crucial for preventing catastrophic climate change, saving our oceans, and protecting remaining natural forests – all of which are prerequisites for human development and well-being;

The Post-2015 development agenda should also focus on implementing obligations and commitments already made under the different the Multilateral Environmental Agreements;

Ensure the new goals must not only speak to and inspire governments and aid agencies, but the private sector, investors, and the public at large; and

Urge UNEP to support and assist the participation of MGS in the post-2015/SDGs related processes to promote the UNEP approach of embedding the environment in all the discussions leading to the SDGs and its implementation.

### ***On the implementation of UNEP PoW in the European region:***

Appreciate UNEP's effort for opening opportunities to include the views, expertise and knowledge of MGS in the implementation of the PoW;

Acknowledge UNEP's continued role and contribution in the environment and health process and in particular its continued support for the active participation and engagement of MGS in the process;

Appreciate the national stakeholder consultation for Green Economy and Sustainable Consumption and Production held in different countries with a broad participation of national authorities, international organizations and NGOs; and

Further encouraged UNEP to increase and create additional opportunities to engage NGOs, the private sector, and scientists/academia in the development and implementation of regional programmes.

**The full report of the consultation is also available.**