

A Special Report on Selected Side Events at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or Rio+20)

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Events convened on Wednesday, 20 June 2012

The Trade Dimension in the Follow-Up to the Rio Plus 20 Summit

Organized by UNCTAD and UNDESA



On the agreement of the outcome document for Rio+20, Sha Zukang, Secretary-General of Rio+20, quoted a Chinese idiom: "if you are not ready to do it, don't say it!"

This side event presented UNCTAD's analytical work on trade and development in the green economy, technical assistance and consensus building mechanisms to ensure a robust follow-up to the Rio+20 outcomes. The high-level panel also discussed the establishment of a Global Forum on Green Economy and Trade.

Guillermo Valles, UNCTAD, facilitating this event, emphasized the need to address potential green economy concerns, and introduced the development of a proposed UN voluntary forum over the next coming months.

Sha Zukang, Secretary-General of Rio+20, announced the agreement on the draft outcome document, urging countries to implement the decisions taken in it. He underscored the need for: assembling the necessary tools, skills and knowledge; updating the statistics on capacity, employment and marketing trends; and advancing the green economy through trade. On challenges, he cautioned against protectionism, harmful subsidies, and discriminatory services, saying discussions are needed to address these as trade can be an important tool towards green economy transformation.

Supachai Panitchpakdi, Secretary-General, UNCTAD, stressed that although trade is only mentioned on the last page of the draft outcome document, trade can be a powerful means of placing economies on sustainable development pathways. He called for a greater understanding of the trade processes needed for the transition to a green economy, and stressed significant progress made over the previous decades in the growing renewable energy sector, annual reforestation rates, organic food production and standardization.

On seizing export opportunities for developing countries and addressing potential trade and green economy concerns, Maurice Strong, Secretary-General of UNCED, lamented that current politics are not conducive to strong decisions, and although many areas are weaker than hoped for, he urged for establishing an auditing body to monitor the agreements made by governments. He emphasized the strong presence of social media in informing public opinion, and called on people to force their governments to act accountably.

Sheikha Lubna Bint Khalid Al Qasimi, UAE's Minister for Foreign Trade, welcomed the establishment of a timely platform to reflect and discuss the ways of navigating the sustainable development process, and pledged the commitment of the UAE towards a truly sustainable future through engaging in debates that will produce trade policy frameworks.

Manuel Pulgar-Vidal Ojaló, Peruvian Minister of Environment, related the difficulty of transforming the current trade model, which was not designed to support environmental protection in a country that depends largely on mining activities for its income and employment, noting it is unclear at this stage how trade will support a green economy.

Brendan Vickers, South African Department of Trade and Industry, highlighted the opportunities of transitioning to a green economy, including: reducing GHG emissions; supporting local manufacturing capacity through green industries in the renewables sector; setting targets for localization in manufacturing; and using trade opportunities arising from green technologies.

Aaron Cosby, International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), emphasized key potential economic development impacts of trade in green economies, and stressed the advantages of developing an international trade forum as a platform to develop trade rules and to settle disputes.

More information:

<http://www.unctad.org/>

Contact:

Lucas Assunção
<lucas.assuncao@unctad.org>

Know our Ocean, Protect our Marine Treasures, Empower Ocean Citizens

Organized by the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), WMO, Fond Tara, the Government of Denmark, Sandwatch Foundation and UNESCO World Heritage Centre

This event, moderated by Wendy Watson-Wright, Executive Director, IOC, highlighted how the undivided ocean needs inter-related actions to approach sustainable use of its resources.

Irina Bokova, Director-General, UNESCO, lamented that only 1% of the world's ocean areas are protected, and urged enhancing environmental education so citizens do not take ocean sustainability for granted. On enhancing the knowledge base, she stressed the importance of WMO's Global Observing System. She noted her organization's leading role in protecting ocean ecosystems through the establishment of marine heritage sites, which represent one-third of the world's marine protected areas.

Patricia Miloslavich, Census of Marine Life, stressed that only 10% of total marine biodiversity is known, and noted that 90% of the oceans' biomass is composed of microbes. She highlighted the 90% decline in fish populations from baseline measurements and said that scientific challenges include acquiring an integrated global view, filling knowledge gaps, and knowledge on how humans can use and protect the oceans.

Michel Jarraud, Secretary-General, WMO, presented on early warning systems for the protection of coastal communities. Citing the example of Hurricane Katrina, which hit New Orleans in 2005, he underlined that even the most developed countries are vulnerable to natural disasters exacerbated by climate change. Noting that oceans contain memory of the climate system, he explained how the El Niño/La Niña-Southern Oscillation system can have impacts on the other side of the planet such as in Ethiopia's recent drought. Jarraud described WMO's Integrated Global Observing Systems (WIGOS), the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS), and the Coastal Inundation Forecasting.

Clayton Lino, Mata Atlântica Coastal and Marine Biosphere Reserve, presented on the UNESCO contribution to and the institutional structure of the Mata Atlântica Biosphere Reserve system. He said that the main threats in Atlantic rainforest coastal areas include chemical pollution, urbanization, fishing and the newly-found offshore oil and gas wells.

Frauke Fleischer-Dogley, CEO, Seychelle Islands Foundation, using the Aldabra atoll as an example, noted that no other international protected areas system holds its sites accountable for its conservation efforts as does the UNESCO World Heritage Marine Sites. She urged for these sites, which represent 0.3% of the world's oceans, to expand over into the 99% of the oceans that are not protected.

Gillian Cambers, Co-director, Sandwatch Foundation, described a worldwide Sandwatch programme that measures, assesses, shares information and takes action on beaches. She said the programme depends on support from volunteers, UNESCO and the Danish Government. She urged keeping citizens at the forefront of conservation.

Romain Troublé, Tara Expeditions, gave an example of a schooner expedition that conducts scientific investigations and promotes marine conservation in coastal communities around the world. He said that oceans must be protected for humanity's sake rather than the whales' sake.

Jean-Michel Cousteau, President, Ocean Futures Society, said Rio+20 negotiators have the opportunity to protect 20% of the world's open oceans. Cousteau noted that decision-makers often do not have access to information to take proactive decision on the oceans. Noting the examples of President W. Bush and President Zedillo deciding to take action on marine conservation in Hawaii and Baja California, respectively, Cousteau said the secret of convincing politicians to act on oceans is through their heart, which leads to breaking down their defense systems.



Patricia Miloslavich, Census of Marine Life, said the role of IOC in advancing marine biodiversity knowledge is crucial.



Gillian Cambers, Co-director of Sandwatch Foundation, urged to keep citizens at the forefront of conservation.

More information:
<http://ioc.unesco.org/>

Contact:
 Wendy Watson-Wright
w.watson-wright@unesco.org

Resilient Cities - Fostering Local Action for Sustainable Development

Organized by UNISDR, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), UN-HABITAT, IFRC and ICLEI

This event discussed the “Making Cities Resilient” campaign launched by UNISDR to enhance awareness on the benefits of investing in and building on sustainable urbanization to reduce disaster risks, and focused on the campaign’s “ten essentials” approach, which aims to engage with local governments to work together with local stakeholders. Local government representatives presented existing DRR initiatives based on this approach.

Moderating the event, Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative to the UN Secretary-General for DRR, said that, as of May 2012, there are over 1100 local governments from more than 80 different countries participating in the “Making Cities Resilient” campaign.

Mary Jane Ortega, Secretary-General, Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements, (CITYNET), lamented the lack of trust investors show towards local governments, saying that CITYNET works on building their capacity and improving good governance. She stressed the importance of city-to-city cooperation, saying these efforts need to be scaled-up.

Guiteau Jean-Pierre, Director General, Haitian Red Cross, spoke on Red Cross interventions in informal settlements in Haiti to support government policies and provide communities with clean water, health care and shelters. Jean-Pierre underlined the importance of an integrated approach when working closely with local governments.

Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Bangladeshi Member of Parliament, stressed the importance of focusing on pro-activeness, preparedness and prevention for DRR. He said that awareness raising and engaging with the community is essential. Chowdhury also drew attention to the role of increased urbanization as an asset, not just as a liability, considering that cities contribute 60% of GDP in Bangladesh, stressing the need to protect them from disasters.

Graciela Fernanda Ortúzar Novoa, Mayor of Lampa, Chile, described her country’s reconstruction challenges after the 2010 earthquake and stressed that DRR must start with awareness raising for all stakeholders. Insisting on the need to reinforce the technical capacity of municipal workers, Ortúzar called for the active involvement of local governments in the global DRR discussion.

Peter Gruetter, Cisco Systems, presented examples of promising resilience partnerships, including: public-private partnerships to provide emergency services in Japan; the U-City concept in Korea, based on the use of technology to address urbanization challenges; Urban EcoMap in San Francisco and Amsterdam, enabling citizens and business to compare their climate relevant behaviors; and the Planetary Skin Institute in Brazil, which addresses issues of resource scarcity. He also discussed proactive interdependence as a recipe for DRR and resilience building. He concluded that private sector initiatives to support DRR are not a matter of reputation management, but a business, and stressed that resilience is mission critical.

John Beddington, Head of the UK’s Government Office for Science, focused on the role of science in DRR and resilience building, including prediction and the use of historical data in designing cities in vulnerable areas. He emphasized the need for improved communication between scientists and practitioners, calling for scientists to simplify their language. He concluded that scientific and technologic support should be offered in the context of local community engagement.

In the ensuing discussion, participants commented on, *inter alia*, humanitarian aid in urban areas and women’s grassroots organizations involved in developing plans for resilient cities. On national budget allocation, Tadashi Matsumoto, OECD, emphasized the need for public investment in making cities resilient, instead of simply using the funds for post-disaster rebuilding.



MS. MARGARETA WAHLSTROM
Margareta Wahlström, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for DRR, emphasized the need for decisions to support actions and broaden partnerships, including between governments, local communities and civil society.



Acknowledging parliamentarians’ role on legislation, budget allocation and awareness building, Saber Hossain Chowdhury, Bangladeshi Member of Parliament, emphasized that all action needs to be local in order to be effective.

More information:
<http://www.unisdr.org/>

Contacts:
Elina Palm <palma@un.org>

High-Level Event: “Renewing Africa’s Energy Future”

Organized by the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)

This side event considered whether implementing sustainable energy solutions are imperative for Africa’s long-term social and economic development. It also addressed ways African countries can make a critical contribution to the adoption of renewable energy, and how the international community in general, and IRENA in particular, can help accelerate the deployment of renewable energy in Africa, in the context of post-Rio+20 implementation.

Salvador Namburete, Mozambiquan Minister of Energy, Chair of the Conference of Energy Ministers of Africa (CEMA) and President of the IRENA Assembly, said Africa is endowed with enormous renewable energy potential that is largely untapped due to lack of technology and capacity.

Adnan Amin, Director-General, IRENA, noted the growing demand for energy in Africa, and called for new pathways to turn this potential into development opportunities.

Marcio Zimmerman, Brazilian Deputy Minister of Mines and Energy, spoke of the many social and economic challenges faced by developing countries, calling for the use of renewable energy as a force for driving development.

Fouad Douiri, Moroccan Minister of Energy, Mines, Water and Environment, shared the Moroccan experience of creating a sustainable energy future, emphasizing the current generation’s responsibility in transitioning from fossil fuels to renewable energy.

Antero Veiga, Cape Verde’s Minister of Environment, stressed that even resource-limited countries can have the ambition of being 100% renewable in the long run, and urged for international assistance to access affordable finance and establish private-public partnerships.

Dipuo Peters, South African Minister of Energy, related her country’s progress in transitioning to renewable energy technologies, urging regional cooperation while eliminating the “not in my backyard” attitude towards some renewable technologies.

Elham Ibrahim, Commissioner of Infrastructure and Energy, African Union Commission (AUC), suggested that countries in Africa focus on developing a diversity of renewable energy technologies simultaneously in their respective countries, and called on African countries to prioritize a renewable energy transition.

During the ensuing discussions, high-level panelists participated in response to a question on Africa’s experiences in the deployment of renewable technologies. Sheikha Lubna Bint Khalid Al Qasimi, UAE’s Minister for Foreign Trade, stressed the UAE’s commitment to assist African countries to develop renewable energy strategies through the Abu Dhabi Fund for Development.

Jamal Saghir, World Bank, emphasized the need to develop a platform for action, saying it should catalyze the African renewable energy sector and provide seed funding for technology development.

Irene Muloni, Ugandan Minister of Energy and Mineral Development, said Uganda is richly endowed with renewable resources, but is faced with capacity and financial challenges to their development.

Alfa Bocar Nafo, Mali’s Minister of Environment and Energy, lamented the time required to develop renewable energy technologies, noting the need for more time, means of implementation and awareness-raising.

Fatou Gaye, Gambian Minister of Forestry and the Environment, suggested examining the failures of previous decades in successfully designing improved energy technologies, and cited the biggest constraints in Africa to be financial and human resources.



Dipuo Peters, South African Minister of Energy, cited the wind mapping initiative in South Africa as example of future collaboration efforts on the continent.



Marcio Zimmerman, Brazilian Deputy Minister of Mines and Energy, said renewable energy deployment in Africa poses an excellent opportunity for integration and implementation of technologies.

More information:
<http://www.irena.org/>

Contact:
 Miquel Muñoz Cabré <mmunoz@irena.org>

High-Level Dialogue on Natural Capital Accounting

Organized by the Government of the UK, World Bank and Natural Capital Declaration

In this side event, heads of state and other high-level policy-makers, alongside representatives from the private sector and civil society, endorsed the Natural Capital Declaration and acknowledged the importance of natural capital in a sustainable global economy.

Chairing the session, Rachel Kyte, World Bank, said the Declaration was an exemplar of cooperation between government, civil society and the private sector, and underlined the World Bank's efforts to build a green economy, including the project on Wealth Accounting for the Valuation of Ecosystem Services (WAVES).

Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister of the UK, expressed his strong support for the Natural Capital Declaration, highlighting the importance for countries and companies to generate richer, multidimensional statistics on wellbeing that go beyond conventional economic measures of wealth.

Laura Chinchilla Miranda, President of Costa Rica, underscored the importance of natural capital to ensure ecotourism, bioprospecting, sustainable agriculture and other activities for the development of Costa Rica.

Jens Stoltenberg, Prime Minister of Norway, describing deforestation as a prime example of the improper valuation of nature and announced his country's commitment of up to US\$ 1 billion dollars to the Amazon Fund.

Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of Gabon, said his government has adopted sustainable development legislation that aims to give value to social and natural capital, and is working with Brazil and France to advance its technical capacity to monitor forest carbon.

Janez Potočnik, European Commissioner for the Environment, pointed to the EU's adoption of environmental-economic accounts as an example of how natural capital can be introduced into economic decision-making.

Gunilla Carlsson, Swedish Minister for International Development Cooperation, reflected that natural capital accounting can promote democracy and accountability by improving the transparency of public decisions.

Bui Quang Vinh, Vietnamese Minister of Planning and Investment, underscored his country's recognition of the importance of natural capital for sustainable growth and development.

Joop Atsma, the Netherlands' State Secretary for Infrastructure and the Environment, noting the need to strengthen national capacities to measure natural capital, announced the Netherlands' decision to commit € 2 million to this end.

Francisco Gaetani, Brazilian Deputy Minister of Environment, congratulated partners of the Declaration, recalling that measurement is not an end itself but a policy instrument for sustainable development.

Helle Thoring-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, reiterating the importance of natural capital accounting to help the world deal with growing populations and scarce resources, highlighted the need for ambitious, long-term decisions, public-private cooperation and pursuit of business opportunities in the green economy.

Following statements from high-level policy makers, Andrew Mitchell, Global Canopy Programme, moderated a panel from the private sector and civil society.

Justin Mundy, Prince's Charities Foundation, noted the declaration from Botswana, Liberia, Namibia, Ghana, South Africa and other African countries to produce annual natural capital accounts.

Rosemary Bissett, National Australia Bank, said her company recognizes the need to integrate sustainability into core business and risk management decisions, and financial products and services.

Paul Polman, CEO, Unilever, affirmed his support for the Declaration, and underscored the need for youth to demand green products.

Antoine Gosset-Grainville, CEO, Caisse des Dépôts, said that investment companies have a duty to invest in the green economy.

Jochen Zeitz, Chairman, PUMA, said he was encouraged by the transformation of natural capital accounting from an academic exercise into a business tool, noting the work of his company's Environment Profit and Loss Account.

Yolanda Kakabadse, President, WWF, stressed the need for clear and comparable methodologies, and leadership support for national natural capital accounts.

Pavan Sukhdev, TEEB for Business Coalition, said government and corporate support is moving natural capital accounting from an idealist's dream to a pragmatist's reality.

Neil Hawkins, Dow Chemical, remarked on his company's partnership with The Nature Conservancy to bring natural capital valuation to the local level.

Carlos Federico Aires Duque, CEO, Infraprev, said that natural capital accounting would help ensure peoples' welfare and quality of life.



Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister of the UK, announced that the UK will oblige companies listed on the London Stock Exchange to report their GHG emissions.



Helle Thoring-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, stated that her country intends to convert its entire energy supply to renewable sources by 2050.

More information:

<http://www.naturalcapitaldeclaration.org/>

Contact:

Christina MacFarquhar
<c.macfarquhar@naturalcapitaldeclaration.org>

From Rio to Rio: A 20-year Journey to Green the World's Economies

Organized by the GEF, UNEP, UNDP, World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Brazilian Ministry of the Environment and the UNFCCC, UNCCD and CBD Secretariats

The event, moderated by Monique Barbut, CEO, GEF, showcased and distributed a publication commissioned by the GEF entitled "From Rio to Rio: A 20-year Journey to Green the World's Economies," telling the story of the first 20 years of the GEF, and drawing from a sample of 20 initiatives that show the impacts and breadth of the portfolio amounting to over US\$ 50 billion. The event also presented new commitments by the GEF and its partners for the next round of funding in 2014.

Referencing the GEF's Danube Basin River Project as one of the world's most international river basin projects, Barbut stressed that GEF projects reveal the increasing links between the global environment and the global economy. Citing another GEF project in Brazil in collaboration with Fundbio, the World Bank and KfW, she highlighted the multiple benefits that GEF projects can provide in terms of carbon, biodiversity and social benefits. Distributing the list of 12 GEF commitments to the audience such as expanding access to GEF funds through the accreditation of additional national, regional and international institutions, she said the success of the GEF's implementation will be judged in the next 20 years.

Edward Norton, UN Goodwill Ambassador for Biodiversity, said the GEF projects he visited demonstrated large financial and community leverage. Citing a GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) project to replace woodfuel in Kenya, he said a small investment can have a massive impact on communities. Applauding the GEF for having a specific operational programme on an abstract concept such as biodiversity, he said the GEF is an incredible instrument.

Noting that a land degradation neutral world would turn the tide for sustainable development, Luc Gnacadja, UNCCD Executive Secretary, payed tribute to the GEF for having made land degradation one of its focal areas. Melchiade Bukuru, UNCCD, expressed hope that the GEF would allocate as many resources to land degradation in the next GEF replenishment cycle as it does to the climate change and biodiversity operational programmes. He also underlined the climatic, biodiversity and land degradation merits for the GEF to invest through the SGP in solar cookers for poor, rural households in Africa.

Explaining that the GEF has funded climate change projects in all developing countries, Christiana Figueres, UNFCCC Executive Secretary, applauded the GEF for having left a "climate fingerprint" in all these countries. She also lauded the GEF's CEO for her stubbornness in striving to implement environmental goals. She explained that the UNFCCC and the GEF has a joint steering committee to help establish the Green Climate Fund. Figueres also regretted the lack of a globally coordinated environmental movement that will engage private sector, government and civil society on carbon markets.

Braulio Ferreira de Sousa Dias, CBD Executive Secretary, said one of the major challenges of the GEF is to mainstream its projects across sectors such as agriculture and transportation. Noting the strong cultural and economic arguments to protect biodiversity, he said biodiversity is an opportunity to tackle food security and climate change adaptation.

Marianne Maye, World Bank, said as an implementing agency, her organization has had a catalytic role in its partnership with GEF projects, which has linked local needs with global ones. She drew attention to GEF projects in Brazil, which is the only environmental multilateral project to have received a prize from the US Treasury.

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed: the role of education in GEF projects; the feasibility of eliminating DDT and other more harmful chemicals in developing countries by 2020 thanks to GEF projects; and the dissemination of local learning obtained in GEF SGP projects to Rio+20 negotiators. Upon an inquiry as to the possibility for investors to invest in the GEF as shareholders, Barbut replied that a public offering is an interesting new idea to explore. Other participants posed questions on indicators of human and social capital emanating from GEF projects, and how to ensure long-term sustainability of GEF projects. All panelists commented on the urgency of developing more effective ways of communicating the importance of acting on climate change, land degradation and biodiversity to average citizens.



Monique Barbut, CEO, GEF, stressed that GEF projects reveal that environmental issues are increasingly related to development issues such as food security and international security.



Edward Norton, UN Goodwill Ambassador for Biodiversity, stressed the importance of educators and the media in distilling complex environmental issues, such as biodiversity, to average citizens.

More information:

<http://www.thegef.org/>

Contact:

Christian Hofer <chofer@thegef.org>

Signing Ceremony for the Agreement on the Establishment of the Global Green Growth Institute

Organized by the Governments of the Republic of Korea, Denmark, Australia and Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI)

During this high-level side event, a signing agreement involving delegates and heads of state established the GGGI as an international organization.

Opening the ceremony Richard Samans, Executive Director, GGGI, said the event heralded a new kind of organization for the 21st century, remarking on its interdisciplinary approach and multi-stakeholder board, balancing the priorities of developing and developed countries.

Han Seung-soo, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, Chair of GGGI Board of Directors, said the signing ceremony marked a significant step towards a new era of global sustainability based on the paradigm of green growth. Han welcomed Lars Løkke Rasmussen, former Prime Minister of Denmark, as the incoming Chair of the GGGI Board.

Lee Myung-bak, President of the Republic of Korea, expressed his appreciation to the signatories of the agreement, and underscored his country's commitment to promote green growth, including through efforts such as the recently enacted legislation to create a national carbon emissions trading scheme.

Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, lauded the visionary leadership of President Lee, and strongly endorsed the GGGI, noting that the organization will foster the cooperation needed to meet global challenges beyond the reach of any single country, no matter how powerful or resourceful.

Julia Gillard, Prime Minister of Australia, expressed her support for the GGGI and promoted a shared vision of the world where growth can be both green and bring prosperity.

Helle Thoring-Schmidt, Prime Minister of Denmark, remarking the signature agreement carries the status of a treaty, expressed her conviction that it would further strengthen the GGGI as a strong voice in the dialogue on global green growth.

Meles Zenawi, Prime Minister of Ethiopia, expressing thanks for the agreement, said technology and finance are key to successful development.

Donald Ramotar, President of Guyana, congratulated the GGGI's founding partners, noting that the bulk of opportunities for a vibrant and sustainable global economy exist in the developing world, where the majority of the planet's natural capital is found.

Nick Clegg, Deputy Prime Minister of the UK, expressed his appreciation for President Lee's efforts, noting the relevance of green jobs and the GGGI to developed countries whose failing economies must look to new models of green growth.

Abdullah Bin Hamad Al Attiyah, Deputy Prime Minister of Qatar, lent his strong support for the GGGI and expressed his pleasure seeing Qatar join as a founding member.

Anote Tong, President of Kiribati, noting his country's vulnerability to climate change, said he looked forward to the progress it will deliver.

Heads of 16 delegations signed the agreement establishing GGGI as an international organization: Australia, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Denmark, Ethiopia, Guyana, Karibati, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Paraguay, the Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, UAE, the UK and Vietnam.



Lee Myung-bak, President of the Republic of Korea, said that the ultimate aim of the GGGI is to foster partnerships and actions to tackle food security, climate change and other pressing issues.



Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, offered his strong support to the success of the GGGI.

More information:
<http://www.gggi.org/>

Contact:
 Hee Kyung Son <h.son@gggi.org>