



BRIEFING NOTE ON THE TWELFTH SESSION OF THE GLOBAL MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS FORUM (GMGSF-12): 19-20 FEBRUARY 2011

The twelfth session of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-12) was held from 19-20 February 2011 in Nairobi, Kenya. The event was organized by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and took place shortly before the UNEP Governing Council's annual session. Over 100 participants attended GMGSF-12, which aimed to provide a platform for exchange and consultation on key environmental issues to be addressed by member states during the 26th Governing Council and Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-26/GMEF).

Discussions were held on issues, including international environmental governance (IEG), green economy and partnerships with major groups and stakeholders towards Rio+20. There was also a dialogue with UNEP Executive Director, Achim Steiner. Participants ended their deliberations by watching the premier of the movie "Silent Snow."

OPENING SESSION

Alexander Juras, Chief, Major Groups and Stakeholder Branch of UNEP, welcomed participants to the forum. Mildred Mkandla and Sascha Gabizon, Women's Major Group, expressed hope that any future IEG body will be headquartered in Africa, and called on participants to use this meeting to make concrete proposals that will feed into the Rio+20 agenda.

In regards to IEG, Tomoko Nishimoto, UNEP, reported that UNEP would like to support governments that build on incremental changes and fundamental reforms. She reported on the Green Economy Initiative in which investments in key economic sectors produce economic growth, alleviate poverty and create employment. Thereafter, the meeting was facilitated by Gillian Martin-Mehers, Bright Green Learning.

SESSION 1: PANEL DISCUSSION ON INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE

Amb. Heli Sirvi, Finland, called for a "distinct, self-standing international environmental regime," which is owned by governments, civil society, major groups and other stakeholders. She also highlighted the success of the Consultative Group of Ministers or High-Level Representatives on IEG and the ensuing Nairobi-Helsinki Outcome. Margaret Kamar, Assistant Minister for Environment and Mineral Resources, Kenya, stressed the need to: build on the current political will and willingness to work on a stronger IEG regime; and strengthen UNEP, making it more responsive to environmental issues.

Arthur Lyn Dahl, International Environment Forum, reported on progress of Major Groups and Stakeholders Advisory Group on IEG, including key strategies for civil society participation in international environmental governance, contained in an information note to delegates attending the GC-26/GMEF (UNEP/GC.26/INF/19).

Negusu Aklilu, Forum for Environment, said a new IEG model should respond to the needs of developing countries, including through: increasing coherence and synergies in multilateral environmental agreements; providing an integrated approach to combat social challenges and environmental

degradation; and making available reliable financial and technological support. Bradnee Chambers, UNEP, stressed the need for capacity building for developing countries.

In the ensuing discussion, participants discussed: the need for a specialized agency to focus on IEG; designating UNEP as this specialized agency; incremental and/or fundamental IEG reform; funding needs for developing countries; and linking the IEG discussion to the green economy discussion. They also discussed: the need for IEG to be people-focused; and compliance and accountability.

In conclusion, representatives of the Major Groups Facilitation Committee (MGFC) called for the mainstreaming and enhancement of the substantive engagement of Major Groups in the IEG process.

SESSION 2: PANEL DISCUSSION ON GREEN ECONOMY

Discussing the economic modeling and sectoral analysis in the Green Economy Report, Steven Stone, UNEP, showed, using examples of the fisheries and agricultural sectors, that investment in natural capital is key to poverty reduction and employment.

Mark Halle, IISD, said that in spite of the global need for a green economy, the transformation to clean energy production systems is slow and the reason that UNEP has encountered initial resistance to this concept is the lack of evidence that this approach would deliver better results than current conventional economic practices.

Martina Bianchini, Dow Chemical Company, spoke on the role of the private sector in the transition to a green economy, stressing that this concept will define the direction in which the world will go.

Anabella Rosemberg, International Trade Union Confederation, noted that the concept of a green economy should "steer the world into much broader societal change."

Lorna Omuodo, Vanilla Jatropha Development Foundation, presented on the green economy and poverty alleviation, describing a renewable energy company, Moto Baraka, which sells portable ethanol fuel.

Talaibek Makeev, Regional Environmental Centre for Central Asia, said the green economy should be linked to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and that long-term political stability and economic resilience is important for shifting towards a green economy.

In ensuing discussions, participants considered: the merits of the model of the Green Economy Report; awareness raising in rural populations and safeguarding against social injustices with regard to implementation of a green economy; the need for baseline information on ecology, human wellbeing and human behavior; and the role of non-governmental organizations in the implementation phase of greening the economy.

Concluding, representatives from the MGFC supported calls for broader societal change.

SESSION 3: DIALOGUE WITH ACHIM STEINER, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF UNEP

This session was moderated by Daniel Magraw, MGFC. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, shared his views on IEG and the green economy in relation to Rio+20, in the context of the GC-26.

Steiner emphasized that the focus of the GC-26 meeting is for the environment ministers to articulate with one voice the state of the environmental discourse with a view to influence

the Rio+20 agenda. He observed that Rio+20 will no longer be dealing with the hypothetical scenarios predicted at the 1972 UN Conference on the Human Environment and the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development, but with the real environmental crises facing the world today.

He described the Green Economy Initiative as being about neutralizing the argument that sustainability can only be achieved at the cost of economic development and challenging the myth that the green economy is a futuristic concept. On IEG reform, he said it is not meant to deal with international level to grassroots level governance issues, but rather with international multilateral based governance.

Steiner reiterated that this meeting of the Governing Council will be the last opportunity for environment ministers to “speak with a very clear voice” on issues of IEG and green economy.

SESSION 4: PARTNERSHIPS WITH MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS TOWARDS RIO+20

Tomoko Nishimoto, UNEP, chaired this session. Giving a keynote address, Lisa Jackson, Administrator, US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), highlighted various milestones of the EPA in the last 40 years, including protecting human health and the environment, helping states comply with the Clean Air Act, and providing technical assistance for the Economy, Energy and Environment Initiative.

She emphasized that the success of any government in building a green economy depends on: the engagement of all stakeholders; the public sector to set the foundation; the private sector to create employment; and NGOs and civil society to ensure that consumers are informed and governments and innovators held accountable. She affirmed the US commitment in promoting the Green Economy Initiative through partnership with UNEP, citing the first Memorandum of Understanding between the EPA and UNEP. Jackson also highlighted involvement in UNEP’s 10-year framework of programs on sustainable consumption and production and Life Cycle Initiative, and partnership with Major Groups, particularly women.

Participants then discussed the role of the EPA in promoting: civil society involvement in green economy discussions; social justice and rights of people through funding and involvement in international processes; opportunities at Rio+20 to accelerate national sustainability strategies and promote Rio Summit’s Principle 10 on the participation of concerned citizens in environmental issues; and the role of social sciences and trade union support in national transitions to a green economy.

Facilitator Martin-Mehers introduced the panel discussion that followed. Michele Candotti, UNEP, presented UNEP’s Strategy towards Rio+20, saying one key ambition for the Rio+20 meeting is that the three pillars of the sustainable development agenda are considered as mutually reinforcing elements of the same equation, and that there was agreement to increase the state of public participation in decision making processes.

Fatoumata Keita-Ouane, UNEP, presented on UNEP’s Fifth Global Environment Outlook (GEO-5), calling on the civil society to get involved in the GEO-5 process during the review stage to make it an even more relevant resource before, during, and after the Rio+20 Conference.

Calling for a bold, clear and loud message from this meeting, Felix Dodds, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, outlined ambitious goals for Rio+20 including a “mini Agenda-21” with clear global goals that could feed into new MDG-setting discussions in 2015.

Aron Belinky, Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and Development, named a number of parallel processes put in place to strengthen the Rio+20 Summit, including the Green Economy Coalition and the Civil Society Facilitating Committee for Rio+20.

Christine von Weizsäcker, ECOROPA, listed essential elements for success at Rio+20, including, *inter alia*, application of the precautionary principle, implementation of the polluter-pays principle, the creation of a stable financial structure, the operationalization of a toolkit for environmental protection, and the endorsement of a stable framework towards a green economy.

Gerry Cunningham, UNEP, informed participants of the Eye on Earth Summit that will be held in Abu Dhabi from 12-15 December 2011.

SESSION 5: REFINING THE KEY MESSAGES TO THE 26TH SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/ GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM (GC-26/ GMEF)

Alexander Juras, UNEP, gave an overview of the structure and link of the Governing Council and GMEF, emphasizing the importance of Major Groups and Stakeholder participation.

Peter Bates and Anabella Rosemberg, MGFC, chaired the session in which Major Groups outlined messages to the GC-26/GMEF. The Farmers said that the principles of organic agriculture - health, ecology, fairness and care - should be considered when greening the economy. The Scientific and Technological Community called for greater: inclusion in the transition towards the green economy; transparency; interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral engagement; and access to information.

Business and Industry stressed that the green economy should promote green products and services, and competitiveness. Workers and Trade Unions stressed the need for a strong organization that will further environmental governance. Local Authorities said that the implementation IEG should create links with national governance and filter down to the grassroots level.

Women asked for more representation in decision making in issues of finance, education and health. The NGOs stressed that UNEP should be the specialized agency in charge of IEG, and highlighted the need to apply the precautionary principle to nanotechnology and geoengineering.

Indigenous Peoples and their Communities urged for more funding for participation at meetings, and for the safeguarding of rights of communities to land, resources and prior informed consent. Noting the need to adopt a science-based approach coupled with strong political will in the run-up to Rio+20, the Children and Youth called for a clear focus on the tipping points in the biodiversity debates and the climate change debate.

Key consolidated messages from the nine Major Groups and six UNEP regions include, *inter alia*: a call for civil society participation and government transparency and accountability in all efforts towards Rio+20; the need for IEG reform to strengthen and achieve environmental justice; the need to web cast the GMGSF to allow for greater stakeholder participation; and a call to all governments to engage strongly and constructively in Rio+20 and take leadership in the process.

EVALUATION OF THE GMGSF

In a brief discussion, delegates highlighted the need for, *inter alia*: printing of important documents; a three day session of future GMGSF meeting to provide for more constructive engagement; more break-out sessions; and an advance list of participants and their corresponding Major Groups.

CLOSING SESSION

During the closing session, Shaikha Ahmed Alalaiwi, Children and Youth, called for communal efforts towards a green planet adding that “those who take up the Green Economy Initiative first will be the first to reap from it.” Tomoko Nishimoto, UNEP, thanked participants for a fruitful session and closed the meeting at 5:38 pm.