



**FBOMS**  
Fórum Brasileiro de ONGs  
e Movimentos Sociais  
para o Meio Ambiente  
e o Desenvolvimento



**Report of the  
Major Groups Preparatory Meeting on the Sustainable Development Consultations with  
the High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence**

*1 June 2006, Geneva, Switzerland*

The preparatory meeting of Major Groups and Stakeholders on the Sustainable Development Consultations with the High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence took place on 1 June 2006 at International Environment House in Geneva, Switzerland. The meeting was organised by Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future, the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service and the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and the Development; and focused on coordinating Major Group inputs to the sustainable development consultations with the Panel that took place on 2 June 2006. This report provides a brief overview of the discussions.

Felix Dodds, Stakeholder Forum, chaired the meeting and welcomed participants. In an opening address, Fritz Schlingemann, Director of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe, welcomed participants to International Environment House and underlined the importance of civil society involvement in system-wide coherence and international environmental governance (IEG). He presented an outline of the IEG process and general environmental reform since the UNEP Cartagena Process and the French proposal to transform UNEP into a specialised agency or a possible UN Environment Organisation. He explained that the aim of the French proposal was to strengthen the 'global environmental movement' in terms of enforcement, compliance, and monitoring which would, by consequence, increase its authority within the global governance architecture. He noted, however, that resolving issues of enforcement is the one particular area of IEG reform where the least progress has been made. He explained the two processes that focus on the issue of IEG, namely: the Secretary-General's High-Level Panel on System-wide Coherence and the intergovernmental consultations in the General Assembly on IEG. He emphasised the necessity of strong civil society voices in both processes. In closing, he referred to the UN Conference on Environment and Development, where emphasis was placed on the need for the UN system to move away from an exclusive governmental system to a more enabling one that involves civil society and private representatives. He noted that the multilateral system, however, was still struggling to implement this shift in practice. He wished participants luck and hoped for forceful contributions from civil society.

This report was written by Jennifer Peer and Richard Sherman, and edited by Erin Stewart. Stakeholder Forum, in cooperation with the UN Non-Governmental Liaison Service and the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and the Development, managed the dialogue on sustainable development. Funding for NGO participation and preparation for the Civil Society Consultations was provided by the UN Foundation and the Government of Norway. For more information please contact:  
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Felix Dodds next introduced the agenda for the consultations with the High-Level Panel and the background documents, namely the compilation document of all Major Groups submissions produced by Stakeholder Forum. The compilation document contains 14 submissions from 15 organisations, including: Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and the Development; Centro De Estudios Ambientales (Argentina); Local Government International Bureau (United Kingdom); Greenpeace International; The Norwegian Forum for Environment and Development; Organisation for Social Development of Unemployed Youth (Bangladesh); World Information Transfer, Inc; ANPED-Northern Alliance for Sustainability; WWF, ANPED, and Greenpeace; International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance; World Business Council for Sustainable Development and International Chamber of Commerce; IUCN-World Conservation Union; International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, and Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future. Richard Sherman, of Stakeholder Forum, reminded participants that UN-NGO Liaison Service (UN-NGLS) is also collecting submissions to the Panel until July 14. The Chair explained that the objective of the pre-meeting was to prepare for NGO consultations with the Panel on sustainable development and to ensure that the consultations are conducted in a constructive and organised manner. He briefly outlined the process of organising the sustainable development consultations with the Panel Secretariat, explaining that this interaction had been 'logistically complex.' Dodds thanked participants for the submissions they provided to the Panel, and asked participants to briefly summarise the main problems and solutions outlined in each organisation's submission.

Jon Reinholt, Norwegian Forum on Environment and Development and UN Association of Norway, highlighted the need for NGOs to press for an outcome that would deliver democracy and equality. He emphasised the need to strengthen the financial base of the UN in order to ensure coherence and coordination.

Daniel Mittler, Greenpeace International, explained that the organisation had submitted two contributions: one jointly with ANPED and WWF, and one on trade and the environment. He said the latter argued that the World Trade Organisation (WTO) is 'stepping over its mark and must be put back in its place,' and urged that the WTO be subjected to a global review. He proposed strengthening the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). In order to ensure enforcement he suggested that compliance and liability mechanisms be built into the IEG architecture. Finally, he said a new global governance system is required which equally balances economic, social and environmental concerns.

Cyril Ritchie, Environment Liaison Center International (ELCI), supported the call for strengthened financing to the UN, without which, any cohesion achieved would be undermined.

Richard Sherman, Stakeholder Forum, explained that the SF submission addressed proposals for system-wide reform focusing on strengthening the three pillars of sustainable development. He proposed the consideration of transforming the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) into a subsidiary body of the General Assembly, rather than the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The CSD would also assume the sustainable development-related issues of the Second Committee. In addition, he said the proposal addressed the strengthening of UNCTAD as the key organisation for the economic pillar of sustainable development, and a more coherent role for the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and inter-agency processes.

Bowdin King, International Council for Local Environmental, Initiatives supported the submission made by the Local Government International Bureau (LGIB). He supported their concerns over the role of the UN Advisory Committee of Local Authorities. He said the UN

needs to very clearly recognise that local authorities are not just political bodies, but also implementers of sustainable development policies, and urged enhanced coordination and streamlining of the UN system. Regarding the CSD, he said ECLEI would like to see a greater emphasis on the sharing of local government implementation experience in national governments, and highlighted the need for improved access for stakeholder groups to national governments.

Meenakshi Raman, Third World Network (TWN), stressed the need to question the paradigm of the reform agenda. She said that in striving for coherence, the UN system is being pushed closer towards a neoliberal paradigm, with a UN that is increasingly responsive to International Financial Institutions (IFIs), particularly the Bretton Woods Institutions. She additionally commented the UN should put sustainable development front and centre of the reform agenda and ensure that the multilateral system is a counterweight to the IFIs. Jan Gustav Stradanaes, ANPED, supported TWN's comments. He cautioned participants to be wary of assumed positive connotations associated of the word 'reform' and said civil society must diligently ensure that the reform process yields a strengthened, rather than a weakened, multilateral system. He expressed concern that civil society had yet to be properly integrated into the reform process. June Zeitlin, Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO), explained that they had prepared a paper on gender equality. She supported the Greenpeace-WWF-ANPED paper in principle, and underscored the strong links between the sustainable development and gender equality agendas.

Gordon Shepard, WWF-International, presented the Greenpeace-WWF-ANPED submission. He explained that the paper outlines a series of principles for reform, including the precautionary principle. He explained that the integration of environment into development decision-making is critical, though he said the current architecture is too weak to ensure this. Stressing the need to monitor progress in the UN's operational activities, he said there was a need to review progress in the UN's norm- and policy-making body for the environment, particularly with regard to examining results on the ground and providing 'swift, direct and effective' responses at the national level. He emphasised that the international system needs to support feedback and integration processes. Esther Neuhaus, Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and the Development (FBOMS), noted the lack of involvement among Latin American civil society in the reform discussion. She emphasised the conflict between WTO rules and MEAs and the results of such conflict. She noted the need to strengthen UNEP, highlighted the principle of common but differentiated responsibility, and called for a stronger CSD and strengthened public participation in the reform process.

Laura Martin Murillo, SustainLabour and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), said the UN must renew its commitment to working with trade unions, and cited the recent Trade Union Assembly as a good example of such collaboration. She underscored the need for more direct links between UN agencies and the WTO, necessitated consistency with the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), and urged the need to link sustainable development implementation with policies for sustainable consumption and production. She reiterated that UNEP's role must be strengthened to allow it to contribute to a coherent system in which sustainable development is mainstreamed. Margarita Pacheco, International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance (IHRA), explained that the UN system must recognise the new and growing constituency of 'rainwater harvesters.' She stressed that 'rainwater harvesters' are locally-based and support decentralised water governance. She highlighted the need to examine the philosophical elements of system-wide coherence and said the fragmentation of the UN system in regards to water issues has led to these groups having no interlocutor with which to raise their concerns. She noted, however, that the discussion on coherence needs to be made on case-by-case basis, because the mandate of each agency to interact with NGOs is different. Jacqueline Coté of

the World Business Council for Sustainable Development and International Chamber of Commerce emphasised that it is in the interest of Business and Industry to support a strengthened UN. She said mainstreaming sustainable development throughout the UN was in the best interests of business and industry, and stressed the need for accountability, efficiency and coordination. She noted that business should have a larger voice in the UN as they have the potential to deliver positive results for sustainable development. She also supported the strengthening of the CSD.

Participants discussed numerous issues outlined in the submissions. IHRA suggested that Major Groups and stakeholders raise 'sensitive and touchy issues' with the Panel, namely the creation of a UN body to coordinate water issues. ELCI said the proposal to strengthen the CSD merits further consideration and that when addressing the issue of lack of implementation, there was a need to carefully distinguish between Member States and the UN. WWF provided a brief overview of the political climate in which the Panel is currently working, noting that the process was overwhelmed by other major reforms, such as the Peacebuilding Commission and Human Rights Council. They explained that among the Panel, there is no appetite for major institutional reform, and commented that NGOs need to provide very specific and clear recommendations to the Panel.

Participants then discussed procedural issues, including the identification of lead presenters. WEDO provided an overview of how the consultation on gender issues was being organised. All participants supported the utilisation of a similar approach for the sustainable development consultations, with Greenpeace supporting the proposal for a speaker to conclude the discussion. WBCSD emphasised that as each Major Group has distinct issues, presentations should therefore be used as an opportunity to highlight these differentiated positions. Greenpeace said there was a need for a regional and gender balance among the speakers and recommended that speakers do not present organisational positions, but specifically answer the questions posed by the Panel as directly as possible. Participants agreed to this approach.

After a short coffee break, the meeting reconvened to agree on the opening speakers. It was agreed that opening statements would be given by Third World Network, WBCSD, FBOMS, WWF, and ICTFU, after which the floor will be open for participants to interact with Panel members. Participants also agreed that Stakeholder Forum will give a brief concluding statement, emphasising key points raised during the discussion. It was agreed that during the presentations and interventions, participants should give firm, clear and concise recommendations. Interventions should be no more than one minute in length, to allow for an interactive discussion. Several participants also stressed the need for Major Groups to discuss strategies for further interaction with the Panel and related UN reform processes, and IHRA and SF offered to facilitate such a discussion. SF provided details of a new website dedicated to providing information on the UN reform processes related to sustainable development called *ieg-dossier* ([www.stakeholderforum.org/ieg](http://www.stakeholderforum.org/ieg)). FBOMS provided an overview of a recent petition to the WTO and the EU Trade and Environment Ministers concerning the dispute between the EU and Brazil regarding retreaded tires and called for NGOs to sign the petition. ANPED and other participants thanked Stakeholder Forum for organising the sustainable development consultations, the submissions, and the Major Groups preparatory meeting. Participants also thanked Wondwosen (Wondy) Asnake of the UNEP Regional Office for Europe for providing support and a venue for the meeting.

## **Participants**

Jon Reinholdt, Norwegian Forum for Environment and Development  
Daniel Mittler, Greenpeace International  
Bowdin King, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)  
Meenakshi Raman, Third World Network  
Riaz Tayob, Third World Network  
Jan Rademaker, ANPED- Northern Alliance for Sustainability  
Jan Gustav Stradanaes, ANPED- Northern Alliance for Sustainability  
June Zeitlin, Women's Environment and Development Organisation (WEDO)  
Gordon Shepard, WWF International  
Susan Brown, WWF International  
Esther Neuhaus, Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and the Development (FBOMS)  
Laura Martin Murillo, International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)  
Vessela Monta, International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance  
Margarita Pacheco, International Rainwater Harvesting Alliance  
Jacqueline Cote, World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)  
Lawrence Bloom, EcoCities plc  
Daniel Mittler, Greenpeace International  
Cyril Ritchie, Environment Liaison Center International (ELCI)  
Fritz Schlingemann, UNEP Regional Office for Europe  
Wondwosen (Wondy) Asnake, UNEP Regional Office for Europe  
Felix Dodds, Stakeholder Forum  
Jennifer Peer, Stakeholder Forum  
Richard Sherman, Stakeholder Forum