



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

**Statement by FBOMS (Brazilian Forum of
NGOs and Social Movements for the
Environment and the Development) during
Hearing with the UN High-Level Panel on
System-Wide Coherence, 2 July 2006**

Thank you Mister Chair for giving me the floor and share some views from the South. From the Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for the Environment and Development we think that discussions on UN system-wide coherence in the field of sustainable development should link environmental and development issues. Since the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, which was an important landmark for the relationship to discuss these two clusters, some steps have been made backwards. The Millennium Development Goals have been an important sign but do not express sustainable development as an overarching goal to reduce poverty and inequality. Although many conventions have been signed by countries to stop environmental degradation, during the last decades we have been assisting to increasing loss of biodiversity, global warming, degradation of soils and water resources, and chemical pollution.

Developed countries, instead of fulfilling their commitments made under the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), have prioritized the agenda of the powerful WTO with its enforcement mechanisms. One example of the existence of contradictions between WTO rules and sustainability is the TRIPS (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) Agreement, counter-running some principles of the Convention on Biological Diversity and promoting biopiracy relating to traditional knowledge in the South. These conflicts have been highlighted during the Global Civil Society Forum organized by the Brazilian NGO Forum during the COP-8 on the CBD. Current WTO negotiations on Non-Agricultural Market Access also put at risk the sustainable use of natural resources in the South.

Next week, here in Geneva, the European Union will use the Dispute Settlement Body of the WTO to establish a Panel against Brazil to examine that country's position regarding restrictions on the importation of retreated tyres. The importation of used goods is prohibited in Brazil and several MEAs such as the Basel and Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) clearly ask for the phasing out of toxic wastes. It is again a clear case where MEAs may be weakened against WTO rules. We do not support the idea that dispute settlements on sustainable development should happen within the WTO.

The UN system is also weak in ensuring implementation of its agreements when compared to the multilateral financial institution mechanisms. The Bretton Woods Institutions have destabilized economic structures in many developing countries. Conditionalities attached to credits and loans such as the adoption of macro-economic policies and structural adjustment programs have contributed to environmental degradation and social exclusion.

We have several recommendations and considerations to the Panel:

First, we agree that UNEP has to be strengthened. However, developing countries have specific needs: A stronger IEG means to respect the fundamental principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities”. Strengthening of UNEP should occur while simultaneously enhancing the environment, social and development components in other UN institutions. The role of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) has to be improved so that it can better play its integrative function. An enhanced UNEP will make the environmental dimension of the CSD stronger. UNCTAD as a focal point within the UN system dealing with trade and development should also be strengthened and not merge into the WTO.

Second, adequate financing for the national implementation of MEA is necessary. Developed countries should promote adequate technology transfer to assist developing countries in their development needs. OECD countries should also finally designate 0.7% of GNI for ODA.

Third, a discussion on a centralized umbrella structure for MEAs is useful. The same geographical location of program secretaries is an interesting option as well as the parallel organization of various Conferences of the Parties to promote synergy in discussions and decision-making. However centralization should not be dominated by the stronger Northern countries.

Forth, NGOs and grassroot movements, especially in the South have to get involved in discussions on UN reform, system-wide coherence and IEG. The Global Civil Society Forum during COP-8 on the CBD in Curitiba was an excellent opportunity to involve among other civil society organizations the landless movements.

Fifth, south-south cooperation for IEG and system-wide coherence is crucial so as to share resources, exchange technologies and defend the specific needs and interests of developing countries, based on strong alliances experienced in other multilateral negotiations processes such as the WTO.

Sixth: as a central component of the UN system the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration should be promoted and fully put in place at all levels in order to ensure public participation, access to information and environmental justice. A better cooperation between the UN and civil society can help to make sustainable development programs and projects more effective.

As a last point, capacity building for civil society in the South is urgent so that strong alliances can be forged at the national, regional and international level to intensify knowledge, strengthen research and policy formulation to promote the perspectives and positions of the South and for sustainable development.

I thank you for your attention.