

March 25, 2014

U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP)

Open Ended Committee of Permanent Representatives (OE CPR) Meeting

March 24 - 28 in Nairobi

BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY MAJOR GROUP (B&I) SUBMISSION

Enhancing the Substantive Engagement of Major Groups and Stakeholders: The Role of Business

Business and industry groups are long-time partners of UNEP, and applaud the openness being shown in this historic OE CPR meeting. We wish to thank the CPR Chair, Bureau and CPR members for their positive approach to engaging with the several important constituencies that have worked with UNEP since “Day One,” including business. Business and industry groups are looking forward to contributing to UNEP’s work and to preparations for the first ever UNEA. We also wish to thank the UNEP Secretariat that has worked diligently to involve us.

Environmental protection and management are integral to long-term sustainability, along with economic wellbeing and social stability. The private sector has a strong interest and abundant expertise in environmental matters, and has worked with UNEP on cleaner production, sectoral initiatives, greening economic activity, waste minimization, managing chemical risk, among others. Business innovates, invests and implements in ways that the public sector cannot, and thereby helps to provide sustainable solutions to global challenges. Developing substantive engagement options for business holds the promise for cooperation and further work to supplement government efforts. We look forward to advance this as part of a strengthened UNEP, expanding opportunities for the private sector to work with UNEP to offer on-the-ground, practical expertise and real-world advice.

Enhancing the Substantive Engagement of Major Groups and Stakeholders: The Role of Business

Business welcomes this opportunity to continue to consider how to upgrade arrangements for Major Groups’ and Stakeholders’ inputs that would go beyond the “2 minutes at the microphone” model, and explore and enact modalities that allow each constituency to provide a resource to governments and UNEP, enriching and strengthening the fundamental inter-governmental nature of this vital forum. For business, this could take the form of inviting and including business experts to contribute to UNEP scientific assessments, consultation with business representatives on economic opportunities and costs of proposed policies as they would play out in global markets or UNEP in-session workshops on key issues, such as enabling frameworks for technological innovation for cleaner technologies

Business appreciates UNEP’s dedication to openness and substantive engagement for Major Groups and Stakeholders, including business; the progress in this area made over the last ten years has advanced UNEP’s work, and provided lessons in good practices.

Business supports the Principles agreed by Major Groups, Stakeholders and Regional Representatives (MG/S/RR) at last year's Governing Council meeting, the January 27 Common Statement of MG/S/RR and the March 25 MG/S/RR statement to the OE CPR, all of which underscored self-selection, non regression, access to information and meetings and flexibility to reflect different constituencies' composition, structures and resources.

Business, along with other stakeholders, should be invited to inform UNEP's work across the entire life-cycle of policy: from agenda development, to informing policy formulation and decision-making and contributing to implementation. This engagement must be about more than meetings, as a resource to governments and to UNEP's Secretariat.

Meeting the full potential of several key UNEP work areas depends on business involvement and uptake, so upgrading business's relation with UNEP should be approached as a win-win arrangement. As a central partner and stakeholder, we continue to encourage UNEP to enhance opportunities for business to inform UNEP's work from substantive and procedural standpoints. UNEP does maintain important sectoral initiatives for business, such as with travel and tourism, the financial sector and others. As valuable as these are, we encourage UNEP to also strengthen its ties with multi-sectoral business groups that can provide a complementary "all-of-economy" viewpoint and impact.

Clear and recognized entry points for business in UNEP's work will assist in attracting and involving business experts to inform UNEP activities – the current models and opportunities do not yet fully respond or deliver the potential that business has to offer. Business can contribute in numerous areas, including: Economic practicality, green economic activity, supply- and value- chains (SCP), technological innovation and deployment, and the science-policy interface. Such clear and recognized entry points, in addition to multi-stakeholder modalities, would also be relevant for other major groups.

Major Groups and New Categories of Stakeholders

Business supports enhancing Major Group and Stakeholder (MGS) engagement in UNEP's work across agenda setting, informing policy deliberations and implementation. Major Groups are recognized in Agenda 21 as partners in implementation, with a stake across a broad range of issues, as set out in the respective chapters of Agenda 21. We continue to see the value of a distinctive and privileged role for Major Groups across UNEP's entire work program. The new stakeholder engagement policy should advance and strengthen MG contributions.

UNEP's arrangements have already provided a range of opportunities both for multi-stakeholder interactions, such as at the GMGSF meetings and MGFC, and for single constituency activities. UNEP has also offered options for both globally organized constituencies to take part as well as for groups with regional perspectives. We hope this flexibility and range of options can be maintained and strengthened.

We see great opportunity in broadening the involvement of other stakeholders in UNEP, especially where these stakeholders can assist with issue-specific expertise, in informing policy deliberations and assisting implementation. However, rapidly introducing several new categories of stakeholders, putting all stakeholders on the same footing with Major Groups and obliging Major Groups and Stakeholders to organize in the same ways, all at the same time -- as the draft policy seems to suggest -- raises several questions and poses potential practical problems. A sudden addition of new stakeholder designations could overwhelm resources that are

already stretched. It could also make it more difficult for groups, particularly from the Major Groups, with particular expertise or contribution to be involved.

In our view a more gradual and stepped process of transition should be followed to introduce new stakeholder categories and consider options for new modes of structure and interaction that would appropriately include them. It is also critical to ensure that the appropriate resources are in place to support new groups.

UNEP can consider involving different groups of stakeholders on a case by case basis, relevant to the particular issues under discussion, where they might be impacted or have a particular solution to share, and the role which various stakeholders can play during UNEA. Consideration could also be given to exploring other avenues, such as dedicated discussions or other forums that would allow new stakeholders to contribute their perspectives on their priority issues.

We believe it is important to build on what has worked well in UNEP's procedures for working with MG/S, and to allow the Secretariat and Major Groups and Stakeholders to define flexible modalities for these interactions. Finally, as the UNEA begins its work, adjustments will surely be needed, and we hope that the effort to strengthen substantive engagement of stakeholders will continue to evolve and improve, tailored to UNEA's evolution.

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