UNEP Regional Consultation Meeting with Major Groups and Stakeholders: Europe
Baku, 13 November 2012

The UNEP European Regional Consultation Meeting (RCM) with Major Groups and Stakeholders (MGS) in preparations for the 14th Session of the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-14) and the 27th session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC27/GMEF) was held on 13 November 2012, in Baku, Azerbaijan.

The RCM was held in the margins of the "Green Week Baku" initiative that showcased a series of environmental sustainability events, including a youth forum on the outcome of Rio+20, a lecture on environmental diplomacy, the launch of the Green Economy Scoping Study for Azerbaijan, organized by the Government of Azerbaijan, the International Dialogue for Environmental Action (IDEA), and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

The RCM brought together representatives of European civil society organizations, UNEP national committees, local NGOs from Azerbaijan, and observers from other regions of the world who attended the youth forum and environmental diplomacy lecture.

The format of the RCM included a number of presentations, briefings, interventions and thematic group discussions on the following items: the outcome and contribution of MGS to GMGSF-13 and GCSS.XII/GMEF; overview of the major issues from the Rio+20 Outcome Document for MGS and implications for UNEP; MGS perspective on the outcome of Rio 20; Principle 10 application and prospects from the Rio+20 outcome; the role and potential mechanisms for engagement and participation of civil society in a reformed UNEP; the post-2015 development agenda and involvement of civil society; Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); UNEP Global Chemicals Outlook (GCO) report; and briefing on the preparations for GMGSF-14 and GC27/GMEF.

In preparation of this regional statement, participants were divided into four breakout groups to discuss: 1) Potential mechanisms for engagement and participation of civil society in a reformed UNEP (Public Participation in UNEP); 2) Involvement of Major Groups and Stakeholders in the post-2015 Development Agenda, including Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); 3) The 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production patterns; and 4) Mainstreaming Sound and Safe Chemicals Management.

This non-negotiated document reports back on recommendations that the breakout groups formulated for UNEP and Governments in preparation for the GC27/GMEF.

Group 1) Potential mechanisms for engagement and participation of civil society in a reformed UNEP (Public participation in UNEP)

UNEP and civil society are natural allies sharing the same goals for global environmental sustainability. Paragraph 88h of the Rio+20 outcome document recognizes that even closer collaboration between UNEP and civil society is desirable. Public participation in UNEP could be improved in terms of structure, outreach, communication, education and inclusion in decision-making through the following principles and measures:

1) Train all civil society participants to UNEP events in communication/outreach. Improve the capacity of stakeholder groups to communicate environmental issues to other audiences, for example scientists to the public, and journalists when reporting environmental issues.

2) Encourage systematic engagement of civil society organisations (CSOs) into each UNEP sub-programme and project, and include such activities in the work plan of every UNEP division and branch. UNEP should also ensure that such a participatory approach is implemented in relation to processes that it facilitates or for which it acts as a secretariat. The UNEP Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch should be invited to train other UNEP offices to increase public participation on the programmatic level throughout UNEP.

3) Involve Major Groups and Stakeholders in the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives (CPR), including through the right to participate in CPR meetings, access to all information, the opportunity to comment on draft documents, and the possibility of initiating policy recommendations.

4) Establish an ombudsman for future generations within UNEP, with a UNEP specific mandate, to advise the institution on a long-term perspective for its policy guidelines, actions and programmes.

5) Adopt a structured approach to participation together with other UN bodies with clear points of input. UNEP should lead by example and co-operate with other UN agencies and programmes in developing strategies, policies and practical actions for engaging civil society to enhance environmental management. UNEP can become a UN model organization in terms of public participation and access to information

6) Encourage the free flow of environmental information and application of the Aarhus Convention implementation guide globally. UNEP should promote the idea of a legally binding international instrument for the implementation of procedural rights, to increase the impacts of major groups and stakeholders in any consultation. This can be built on the guidelines for the development of national legislation on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters, adopted by UNEP/GC in 2010. UNEP should also adopt an internal policy in relation to the access of information for all stakeholders.

7) Encourage communication with and involvement of all groups through the development of appropriate communication tools, especially focusing on unempowered groups.

8) Make use of modern technologies such as social media and e-tools for translating summaries and making key information available in all relevant local languages.

9) Translate reports and documents into different formats that are relevant to each major group, remembering to address the digital divide in the process, support translation by MGs of UNEP guidelines and publications into local languages.

10) The UNEP Regional Office for Europe should increase the involvement of its regional civil society organisations and networks throughout the year, collecting feedback and inviting comments on its programmes on a regular basis, including through the regional representatives, constituencies of all the nine Major Groups in the region, and revived National Committees.

11) UNEP regional offices should provide frameworks and resources to enable closer engagement between major groups and governments.

12) UNEP should introduce compulsory fieldwork within communities for its staff members, to increase their understanding of and connectedness with realities on the ground.

13) UNEP should work together with youth, students and the educational community to scale up its activities related to promoting Education for Sustainable Development, in particular in the context of the final years of the UNESCO Decade on Education for Sustainable Development.

Group 2) Involvement of Major Groups and Stakeholders in the post-2015 Development Agenda and post-Rio+20 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

As governments and UN agencies plan, design and prepare the ground work to stimulate a debate on the development and articulation of the Post-2015 agenda and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through national, thematic and other forms of consultations, the common solutions needed to meet the sustainable development challenges and "The Future and the World We Want" can not be achieved without the full engagement and involvement of major groups and stakeholders. Therefore, the following should be key areas for achieving "The Future and the World We Want":

1) **Support, facilitate and create opportunities for MGS** to actively participate in national and thematic consultation processes.

2) **Education for sustainable development.** Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) is an integral part of sustainable development. ESD should be one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with concrete indicators and goals.

3) **Youth empowerment.** Give full participation rights to young people in the formulation, implementation and evaluation of local, subnational, national, regional and global sustainable development policies and strategies, as well as to other non-empowered groups including women, indigenous peoples and minorities.

4) **Assessment mechanisms.** Assess the achievements of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) at a national level, and promote participatory assessment tools and mechanisms to do so. Assess what worked and deduct that from that what did not work. Establish concrete goals and targets for the post-2015 development framework and assure involvement of MGS in its monitoring and evaluation.

5) **Human rights based approach and accountability.** Base post-2015 and SDG frameworks on a human rights approach. Establish accountability systems for regions and countries to hold governments accountable for their post-2015 development agreements. These systems should hold governments accountable also on commitments made related to means of implementation (financial support, capacity building, public participation etc.) and the implementation of human rights.

6) **Social media for sustainability.** Promote ~~a more efficient~~ use of new technologies and social media to improve access to information, accountability and sharing of best practices on sustainable development.

7) **Regional cooperation for protection of our global environmental commons.** Strengthen regional cooperation and establish partnerships in order to share innovative tools and best practices and better achieve sustainable development goals.

8) **Research and innovation.** Promote research and innovation that support the development of "green sectors" and creation of decent jobs/employment. Close collaboration with academia, trade unions and also the social-responsible private sector is crucial.

9) **Coordinated stakeholder effort.** Promote better coordination of efforts between stakeholders representing governments, businesses, CSOs, international organizations, academia and media to ensure syncronized actions on local, regional and global levels, based on the subsidiarity principle (what is best done locally, do it locally) increasing their effectiveness and preventing gaps, overlaps and duplication.

Group 3) The 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns

The adoption of the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production patterns, even as a voluntary measure, opens an opportunity to address sustainable development challenges. Therefore, in order to operationalize the framework, the following must be taken into consideration:

1) Mainstream sustainable consumption and production (SCP) into national development strategies and plans. Create adequate legislative and regulatory frameworks for SCP, including national SCP 10-Year Frameworks of Programmes (10YFPs), strategies and action plans, in line with the regional and international agreements and processes, including the 10YFP.

2) Ensure that, in doing so, governments establish proper consultation mechanisms for engaging different stakeholders (civil society actors, businesses, academia, local self-governance bodies and others) in SCP policy processes, ensuring coordination both between sectors (horizontal) and between different levels – international, regional, national and local (vertical) of SCP policy development and implementation.

3) When developing SCP policies, ensure that consultations and engagement reach to the grassroots level, encouraging communities to establish their own specific SCP priorities and define strategies for fulfilling these.

4) Endorse the UNEP mandate on studying the best SCP practices at all levels and developing a methodology for assessing progress in SCP, as well as providing relevant advice to stakeholders.

5) Establish a knowledge-sharing platform to provide information exchange on best available green technologies and business practices, accessible to all interested stakeholders. Reach out to all stakeholders in order to create awareness of the platform.

6) Within the SCP process, establish necessary provisions for promoting the use of strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and environmental impact assessment (EIA).

7) Develop legislative and regulatory frameworks and incentives to promote green procurement, both for the private and the public sector.

8) Promote good eco-labelling practices, ensuring proper tracking of adherence to SCP principles over the whole product life cycle.

9) Develop and implement comprehensive SCP awareness raising programmes, achieving broad understanding of the need and feasibility of vibrant economies which function within and not beyond the carrying capacity of the planet, encouraging individuals, organisations and businesses to make their consumption choices more sustainable.

10) Mainstream SCP into education processes, including formal, informal and non-formal education.

11) Conduct a region-wide conference on SCP policies in light of the 10YFP, with participation of different stakeholders, to assess the state of art in this sphere, share lessons learned in SCP policy development, learn about best practices and discuss future actions and opportunities for cooperation.

Group 4) Mainstreaming Sound and Safe Chemicals Management

The Global Chemicals Outlook (GCO) is a timely publication that frames current understanding of trends in chemicals production, use and disposal, economic implications of these trends, and policy options. To that end: