

UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL
Nairobi, 18-22 February 2013

Item 4 (b): Emerging policy issues: Implementation of paragraph 88 of the Rio+20 outcome document "Future We Want" and UNGA resolution 67/213

STATEMENT FROM THE NGO MAJOR GROUP

Delivered by Jeremy Wates, Secretary General, European Environmental Bureau

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, on behalf of the NGO major group I would like to express our appreciation of the opportunity to contribute to this historic meeting – the first since the decision of the UN General Assembly to accord the UNEP Governing Council universal membership. We hope that Environment Ministers will seize the opportunity offered to strengthen the environmental voice within intergovernmental decision-making.

And there has never been a greater need for such a voice. At seven billion, we humans have already exceeded some planetary boundaries and are approaching others. We are, effectively, running out of time to make the transformation to a low-carbon green economy. In the coming decades, with world population projected to rise by a further two billion, it will be more urgent than ever to find a harmonious relationship between environment and people, and UNEP needs to be right at the cutting edge of that effort.

Establishing universal membership is an important step towards enabling UNEP to exercise leadership in setting the global environmental agenda but **it needs to be complemented by the securing of adequate and stable funding**. Current funding is woefully inadequate for the magnitude of the environmental challenge confronting the international community. Funding is needed, among other things, to strengthen UNEP's presence at regional and national levels, to enable UNEP to play an enhanced coordination role, for capacity building and to ensure the effective participation of civil society.

One of the elements of paragraph 88 which as NGOs we regard as being of particular importance is subparagraph (h) which establishes enhanced stakeholder participation as a key feature of the New UNEP. Effective engagement of civil society will be essential to ensure the required transition to a more sustainable world. This provision refers to the need to draw on best practices and models from relevant multilateral institutions and explore new mechanisms to promote transparency and the effective engagement of civil society.

UNEP can and must take the opportunity provided by paragraph 88h to show global leadership on the issue of stakeholder participation. The feedback provided by the survey on Models and Mechanisms of Civil Society Participation in UNEP carried out by the UNEP secretariat has shown that there is much that is positive to build upon but equally that there is much to be improved upon.

While the mandate given by 88h will take some time to fully explore, we are in favour of an initial focus on UNEP's own processes. To this end, we support the setting up of an open-ended time-limited working group on this issue, which should itself in its modus operandi be a model of best practice in respect of stakeholder participation. The feedback from the aforementioned survey and the report of an expert group that met in January can provide important input to this process. As a further reference point or benchmark, we urge you to take account of a set of principles on stakeholder participation that were adopted three days ago by consensus at the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum and ask that these lay the basis for the forthcoming process. We have made more specific proposals to strengthen the involvement of civil society in the parallel discussions going on in the relevant working group and we hope that these will be taken into account there as well as in the process that follows.

Thank you for your attention.

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