

Statement/ recommendations of the West Asia Regional Consultation Meeting of Major Groups and Stakeholders in Preparation for Rio + 20 and the 27th Session of the Governing Council/ Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC-27/GMEF)

9-10 October 2011, Dubai, United Arab Emirates

We, the participants in the Regional Consultation Meeting of Civil Society Organizations and Major Groups of Western Asia, met on 9 and 10 October 2011 in Dubai in preparation for Rio +20 Summit and the 27th Meeting of the Governing Council/General Ministers of Environment Forum (GC-27/GMEF) as well as the Global Major Groups and Stakeholders Forum (GMGSF-13),

Abiding by Rio Declarations (1992), Agenda 21 and the Millennium Development Declarations (2000),

Recognizing and stressing on their calls to enhance international co-operation in order to overcome the global development and environmental challenges,

Emphasizing the key role of committed international co-operation in promoting fair trade, improving the quantity, quality and effectiveness of overseas development aids to developing countries,

Recognizing the latter's contribution in supporting sustainable development initiatives, protecting and sustaining natural resources and their efficient use and reforming the production and consumption patterns and facilitating not only the transfer of environment-friendly technologies but its indigenization,

Discussed Rio+20 agenda items and agreed on the following recommendations:

First: Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD) and International Environment Governance (IEG)

While stressing the importance of the efforts made by different organizations towards developing International Environment Governance (IEG) within the United Nations system, we emphasized the need to enhance the framework of sustainable development to ensure equity and transparency in line with the international law, through the following:

1. Initiating and developing sound science policy and planning interface; hence crafting environmental and development policies and programs based on strong, credible integrated and coherent science base.
2. Strengthening the Committee of Sustainable Development (CSD) and upgrading it into a "Global Council for Sustainable Development", empowered to oversee the implementation of international conventions and resolutions, particularly Agenda 21, the MDGs and related international conventions. This would enhance cohesion, co-ordination and harmonization among them and hold the governments and other relevant entities subject to regular monitoring.
3. Enhancing UNEP's role and mandate through upgrading its status to be one of the UN organizations similar to WHO and ILO, among others.

4. Encouraging the developed countries to meet their declared commitments during Rio 1992 and Johannesburg 2002 Summits towards the developing countries in order to enable the latter fulfill their needs to achieve the Agenda 21 and the MDGs and overcome the threats hindering the implementation of their sustainable development plans.
5. Finding and developing innovative sources of funds, and securing diversified, sustainable and predictable funding.
6. Promoting the principles of good governance and rejecting all forms of corruption at the various local, national, regional and global levels while empowering the monitoring role of civil society organizations in this respect.
7. Ensuring the participation of civil society organizations and other stakeholders as well as ensuring transparency and accountability at all levels (local, national, regional and global), based on principle 10 of Agenda 21 within the global environmental governance system through:
 - Securing means to respond to the needs of countries which lack good governance mechanisms and regulations.
 - Building capacities in democratic governance and developing national professional and scientific capabilities through the provision of resources, training and education.
 - Setting standards for transparency and accountability and disseminating best practices.
 - Crafting guidelines and standards that promote civil society and stakeholders' participation, and advocate for establishing sustainable development councils both at the local and national levels.
8. Adopting comprehensiveness to ensure that all significant environmental threats are appropriately addressed, through mechanisms that ensure:
 - Continuous evaluation of the state of the environment and technological developments in order to assess and address urgent problems and emerging threats;
 - Developing early warning systems, building and enhancing capabilities to promptly respond to and rectify environmental threats at various levels (local, national, regional and global) in a co-ordinated and precautionary manner.

Second: Green Economy

In view of UNEP's definition of Green Economy as one "that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. In its simplest expression, a green economy can be thought of as one which is low in carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive (...). The concept of a green economy does not replace sustainable development, but there is growing recognition that achieving sustainability

rests almost entirely on getting the economy right¹; and despite the reservations of some CSOs and MGS on this definition², we stressed the need that Green Economy should:

1. Achieve social justice, eliminate poverty, enhance social integration, create job opportunities and provide basic requirements for human welfare;
2. Ensure optimum and wise use of natural resources with high efficiency while protecting them from all forms of adverse practices and activities in order to ensure their sustainability for future generations;
3. Halt unsustainable production and consumption practices which hinder sustainable development, and curb activities that aggravate the greenhouse effect and climate change impacts in order to sustain safe living on earth.

Accordingly, we highlighted the following:

1. Green Economy is one tool to achieve sustainable development objectives and principles, and not a substitute. It is a means and not an end by itself.
2. The need for developing nations to acquire environment-friendly technologies which enable them to embark in the transition to green economy and to indigenize these technologies to ensure their sustainability.
3. Not to use Green Economy as a vehicle to impose taxes or non-tariff barriers as a form of hidden protectionism by developed countries.
4. Enhancing, activating and institutionalizing the concept of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in building capacities and eliminating poverty, provided that this concept relies on respecting human rights, all international conventions and agreements related to economic, social and cultural rights as well as the Universal Declaration on the Right for Development.

More specifically, on West Asia front, we emphasized the need for:

1. Promoting regional co-operation to meet the region's needs through prioritizing the economic development programs and the implementation mechanisms in the transition to Green Economy.
2. Laying down a mechanism for regional co-operation in the sector of renewable and/or alternative energy.
3. Catalyzing technology transfer within the region to ensure proper transfer and indigenization along with capacity building and training.
4. Encouraging investment in scientific research through the provision of incentives to companies (within the region and with developed countries), ensuring the participation of different segments of the society, supporting scientists and funding researchers in the region.

¹ Towards a green economy- paths to sustainable development and elimination of poverty. Reference for policy makers, UNEP, 2011.

² Arab Non-Governmental Development Organizations Network expressed its reservation on the definition of the green economy on the ground that it still revolves around general goals without addressing neither the means to achieve them nor the obligations to be taken by governments, particularly of the industrialized countries)

5. Adopting high quality control/quality performance standards in managing the process of transition to Green Economy and beyond.
6. Integrating sustainable development concepts in the educational and training curricula at different levels.
7. Empowering civil society organizations and promoting their participation along with governments and private sectors in sustainably managing the various natural resources in the different stages of planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation.
8. Making use of and direct the resources available in Waqf funds among other resources, including Zakat, etc. (in accordance with Shari'a guidelines) as well as some Arab development funds (sovereign funds) to implement sustainable development programs that serve in minimizing disparities and eliminating poverty.
9. Reviewing, updating and enforcing environmental legislations at the national and regional levels.
10. Integrating the environmental dimension into national policies, strategies and programs to realize the objectives of sustainable development.

Based on the above, we emphasized that Green Economy should spring from a vision that takes into consideration the specificities of local communities (particularly developing nations) through defining their economic and social development priorities and implementation means. The latter shall be based on enhancing productive sectors in the framework of Green Economy in a way that would meet local needs; create new green job opportunities, realize effective social participation in development and ensure just distribution of development outcomes, reduce poverty and marginalization and increase social welfare.

In this respect and within the strategies of transition towards Green Economy, we highlighted the need for adopting the following priorities:

1. Production and consumption trends: to urge nations to change their consumption and production patterns and behaviors to be more sustainable, in line with Agenda 21, by facilitating and promoting initiatives that adopt environment-friendly production trends and conscious consumption practices.
1. Renewable energy: to urge states and empowering them technologically to use different types of renewable energy, such as solar energy, wind, waves among other forms of alternative clean energy resources available in the region.
2. Green building: to urge states and promote the application of the green building policies

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