



Final Statement

West Asia Regional Preparatory Meeting for the 8th Global Civil Society Forum
Manama, Kingdom of Bahrain
31 October-1 November 2006

General statement

The West Asia civil society representatives wish to express their appreciation to the efforts of the previous UNEP executive director Mr. Klaus Topfer and wish to welcome the new executive director of UNEP Mr. Achim Stienner who is the best successor to the best predecessor.

We also wish to give our thanks to IESCO for hosting/cosponsoring the meeting and we also wish to thank the representatives of the North Africa representatives who attended as observers for their valuable contributions.

The West Asia groups meeting in Manama call upon UNEP governing council:

- To consider the cultural heritage of the region and believe that Arabic should be used as a medium for deliberations in the West Asia Regional meetings and in written communications with UNEP.
- To solicit input from environmental civil society groups when considering development projects in their respective countries.
- To re-consider the status of UNEP and upgrade it to the level of organization instead of a program. (floor deliberations)

Statement on Water and environment

The region countries are in either a "stressed" or "severely stressed" water supply condition. Unsustainable practices, such as the use of fossil groundwater, and desalination using fossil fuels are common. Further, some of the water resources are shared between countries and there is no coordination. Unverified data indicates that over 80% of available water is used for irrigation.

The civil society groups meeting in Manama are calling upon their respective governments in the UNEP Governing Council to:

- Develop, adopt and periodically revise Integrated Water Resources Management Plans to achieve efficient use of the limited water resources and to reach a balance between demand and supply. IWRMP's should focus on achieving the maximum efficiency in agricultural usage of water.

- Endeavour to coordinate the IWRMP's regionally to provide for efficient and equitable use and to maximize the economic return of the limited water resources available.
- Collect, update and share data that would clearly define the existing water resources and water demands.
- Incorporate the potential effects on the environment such as coastal areas, Key Biodiversity Areas and other environmental issues in addition to the socio-economic aspect in the development of the IWRMP.
- Solicit multi stakeholder inputs in the development of the IWRMP's.
- Utilize academic institutes and research centers both within the country, regionally and internationally to build capacity and to help in the development of the IWRM.
- Develop policies that encourage the production of environmentally appropriate crops in their respective countries, and to modernize irrigation methods to reduce waste and to avoid the use of genetically modified seeds and other modern techniques unless proven safe for the health and the environment.
- Adopt the UNEP model for incorporating input from civil society in the development of policy and execution thereof.

UNEP is urged to

- Continue to encourage and expand the participation of civil society in the consultative process.
- Encourage member nations to use the capacity of existing civil society organizations and to foster regulatory environments that allow the civil society organizations to exist and grow.
- Build the capacity of civil society organization and help in creating regional networks to facilitate cross border pollination of ideas.
- Produce multi media programs to raise awareness about wasteful water usages.
- Provide platforms for the sharing of data between countries and civil society organizations of the region and to make UNEP data public, where possible.

Civil Society groups are encouraged to

- Lobby their respective governments to develop and adopt IWRMP's. Civil society organizations are encouraged to use parliamentary power to encourage the executive branch to develop and adopt IWRMP's
- Network locally, regionally, and globally, with like minded organizations to share ideas, data, resources to increase their respective effectiveness.
- Help in spreading awareness about the scarcity of water, damage to the environment by local practices and how locals can help in addressing the existing imbalance between supply and demand.
- Build their respective capacity and participate in projects that focus on the collection of data and research projects that endeavor to improve the efficiency of water use.

Statement on Gender and Environment

We emphasize adopting sustainable development plans in consistent with the ethical values of the locals as follows

- Encouraging the participations of both men and women in the process of decision making especially that concerning environmental issues.
- Considering gender sensitive approaches when drafting plans to achieve the MDGs.
- Re-evaluation of policies and environmental plans taking men and women's needs and requirements into consideration.
- Not building populated areas around industrial areas, to avoid the constant exposure of stay at home ladies (which are majority of women) to polluted air.
- Emphasis on women's right to access clean water.
- Emphasis on the role of (both gender) in the execution of international agreements, and initiatives, especially in regards to chemical management.
- Emphasizing the importance of raising environmental awareness in the community.
- Empowerment of women.

Statement on War and Environment

Wars constitute the key cause for human calamities. They embody an undeniable threat to both human being and environment. They result in breaching the human's right to endure and survive in a safe environment free from hazards and risks.

West Asia countries have, and still, been heavily affected by wars and conflicts. Wars have been for long time imposed on the area to compete on and possess natural resources, mainly water and land. For this purpose, countries are destroyed, sea and soil contaminated, land degraded and air polluted. The generation of large quantities of waste (mainly from rubbles resulting from destroyed dwellings), polluted soil due to the vast use of cluster bombs, unexploded ordinances and forbidden weapons (which contain chemical residues and active uranium), the seepage of wastewater into surface and groundwater due to seriously destroyed infrastructure, burned forests and woodlands, polluted air, oil spills into sea, in addition to the loss of marine and terrestrial biodiversity resources, are among the most visible residues of war on environment.

All participants recognize the short, medium and long-term impacts of wars on environment. This leads, in most of circumstances to irreversible destruction of natural and physical ecosystems that are necessary to the survival of local communities. It constitutes the grounds for creating forced exodus and emigration. Due to landmines, cluster bombs and unexploded ordinances, agricultural lands are deserted and socioeconomic livelihoods are lost, thus creating instability both economically and socially. Besides, alternatives to

agriculture in rural areas, such as ecotourism and marine fishing, are highly undermined.

The Participants consider that the upfront motives behind war-related human and environmental destruction is due to the disrespect, and sometimes the deliberate disregard, towards the provisions (commitments) stated in international laws and regulations managing human, environmental and military aspects.

Civil societies of West Asia Countries have succeeded to the ratification of the UN Resolution (A/RES/56/4) in November 2001. Since the role increasingly played by the civil society organisations at the global level is highly significant and active towards trimming down the catastrophes of wars and thereby to cutting short such devastating operations.

Since we, as civil society of West Asia, comprehend the obligation to weigh up the human, logistics and managerial capacities of the civil society working in war zones, and thereby to improve their competences based on sound assessment, in order to enable them to properly and efficiently contribute towards halting the destruction and degradation of ecosystems, either by direct field actions, awareness campaigns or carrying out assessment studies,

Since we understand the importance of setting up an operational mechanism for coordination among the civil society representatives and groups that are active in the field of environment; this mechanism should be based upon clear objectives and activities that advocate for stopping destruction on environment

Since we welcome the role of governments, international community and organisations in working bilaterally or multilaterally to find practical solutions to stop unacceptable abundance and disrespect towards international texts, which call for protecting the human being and the environment and the right of people to survive and prosper,

Therefore, we, as civil society groups of West Asia, urge governments to:

- Impede any use for “massive” destruction weapons during wars;
- Spare natural, socioeconomic, cultural and historical sensitive areas and hotspots from the impacts of wars;
- Stop using cluster bombs, unexploded ordinances, and highly active Uranium in areas considered as highly sensitive for what it represents as human settlements, socioeconomic areas, as well as natural, historical and cultural heritage;
- Redirect investments allocated to weapon production, sale or purchase towards other areas such as development and environment;
- Impose the sale and purchase of weapons to taxation; this taxation shall serve for environmental conservation purposes;
- Abide by and respect their commitments towards signed and/or ratified international laws, conventions and agreements related directly and indirectly to military operations during wars;
- Set up international mandatory regulations and conventions that consider human and environmental destruction as an international crime;
- Accountability towards countries that are behind environmental war crimes;
- Assure their commitments to respect human rights;

- Support the civil society, in all its representations, to carry out their duties for preserving the environment;

We urge UNEP to:

- help countries to develop country-specific emergency preparedness plans that are specific to environment;
- build the capacities of civil society groups to become real UNEP partners in war countries.

We also invite the international civil society groups active in the field of environment to work together, hand in hand, through a well coordinated working mechanism, to fight against wars in general, and alleviate hazards and risks on human being and environment.

Statement on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

(Environmentally Sound Management of Toxic Chemicals, including the prohibition of illegal international trade and trafficking of toxic and hazardous products)

- 1- Promoting the endeavors of the Arab countries to achieve the sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes.
- 2- Reducing the gap between developed and developing countries, in terms of human, financial and technical resources needed for the execution of the relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs). Clear and definitely financial mechanism for extending technical and financial support and technology transfer to developing countries for the implementation of the SAICM
- 3- Protection of the environment and natural resources of peoples under oppression, domination and occupation.
- 4- Adoption of the sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes strategy as a priority within the national, regional and international policy frameworks, including the strategies of developmental assistance provided by international donors.
- 5- Promotion of NGOs and public participation comprising all sectors of the society, especially women, to realize the effective and efficient management of chemicals.

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