

DECLARATION OF THE UNEP LATIN AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM.

Considering,

1. That Principle 10 of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development establishes that different civil society groups should participate in furthering sustainable development, an idea that was ratified at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002 and reaffirmed in the Millennium Declaration of 2005.

2. That in 2002, in Cartagena, Colombia, the governments ratified the UNEP annual practice of organizing the Global Civil Society Forum, together with the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, by adopting decision SSVII.5, which requested the Executive Director "to continue the current practice of convening a civil society forum that is regionally balanced and representative in conjunction with the meetings of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in close consultation with civil society".

3. That the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the American Convention on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (OAS) make it an obligation for the States to guarantee direct citizen participation in public and government affairs for the full exercise of political and civil rights.

4. That a condition for sustainable development is direct, broad, representative and inclusive participation to ensure the building of public policies for environment and sustainable development, and that there is a confirmed and growing interest in participation and action on the part of the civil society organizations of Latin America and the Caribbean.

5. That it is important to recognize the experiences at the meetings between civil society and UNEP, and that it is time to strengthen the sustainable development objectives that promote policies and mechanisms to support the work of UNEP and its member governments.

6. That the importance of Decision 6 on the participation of civil society is an expression of the agreements of the Member States of the Governing Council of UNEP to intensify the harmonization of development and environmental agendas through consultation and participation in the work programmes of UNEP and other agencies of the United Nations.

7. That, recognizing the importance of these processes, the civil society representatives gathered in the framework of the UNEP Latin America and the Caribbean Civil Society Forum held in Bogota, Colombia, on November 1st – 2nd, 2006.

DECLARE:

Globalization and Environment

After examining the implications of the growing degradation of our ecosystems, the civil society representatives of Latin America and the Caribbean make an appeal to governmental institutions and UNEP through the following recommendations:

- That the GEO (Global Environment Outlook) assessments (Global, cities and youth, among others) should include the methodology and conceptual framework of the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA).
- That future assessments should:
 - a. Include the user forums of each country, with the support of UNEP;
 - b. Highlight the importance of the system of values and traditional knowledge;
 - c. Be conducted every 5 years.
- That UNEP should:
 - d. Support the identification and dissemination of alternatives and opportunities in ecosystem management;
 - e. Strengthen two-way mechanisms for information and experience exchange on ecosystem management;
 - f. Take into account:
 - i. The uncertainties identified by ecosystem management, to define and manage financing strategies;
 - ii. The impacts on the environment and communities caused by greater openness to trade and free trade agreements;
 - iii. The concern regarding conflicts caused by the predominance of the rules by the WTO (World Trade Organization) over the multilateral environmental agreements.
- That the documents distributed (reports, etc.) should be translated into the main languages in the region (English, French, Spanish and Portuguese).
- That processes to achieve the MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) should be strengthened and the process for implementing ILAC (Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development) should be expanded in accordance with the indicators, which should reflect the reality in the region.

Chemicals Management

Pursuant to document SAICM/ICCM/.1.7, Section VII, in which it is proposed that an *ad hoc* support working group should be formed, the civil society representatives have identified circumstances that can be coordinated through team-mate work proposals in this field. For this purpose we recommend:

- That an international coordinating mechanism (ICM) should be developed, which:
 - a. Has an *ad hoc* support working group with members of the three conventions (Rotterdam, Stockholm and Basel);
 - b. Fulfils the conference objective (Section VII, Item 4, points *a* to *m* of document SAICM/ICCM/.1.7).

- That mechanisms should be developed to strengthen and support the UNEP chemical division in Geneva.

- That regional and subregional SAICM focal points should be established and stakeholders should be advised of their existence.

- National governments should establish a mechanism for civil society participation in the implementation of the strategy.

- That steps should be taken to obtain new sources of financial resources for the work of this agreement.

Poverty, gender and environment

Women play a very important role in ecosystem and environmental management, as well as the transformation of consumption production patterns. Gender equity is a condition without which poverty cannot be eradicated and sustainable development cannot be achieved, and that is why it is necessary to promote women's participation in all decision adopting processes and to guarantee the exercise of their rights so that men and women together can build new realities. In this understanding, we recommend:

- a. That it is necessary to incorporate the gender perspective into sectoral policies, linking the efforts of the government, the private sector, civil society organizations and communities to design, implement and assess gender and environment programmes and projects.

- b. That the development of capacities and leadership among women should be promoted, particularly among young and indigenous women, through capacity building processes, tutoring programmes, access to Thematic Information Centres (TICs) and technical assistance.
- c. That mass awareness-building processes should be developed to include the relationship between gender, poverty and environment on the public agenda, and communication tools should be designed to strengthen the work of women in different areas.
- d. That the traditional knowledge and wisdom of women in indigenous peoples and rural communities should be valued for its great contribution to environmental conservation.

Water and environment

The importance of water in the context of Latin America and the Caribbean has drawn the interest of not only civil society agents, but also various government entities. That is why, as stakeholders in solving the problems of our environment and civil society representatives, we propose:

1. That the following rights should be recognized:
 - a. Access to safe water as an essential human right for life. This resource should not be privatized, and the State should assume its role as the regulating agency, guaranteeing the availability of good quality water in sufficient amounts for its various uses and reinforcing the principle that “the polluter and waster pay”.
 - b. The right of indigenous peoples to control and manage water resources within their territories and sites of traditional use, fostering the

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