



## UNEP Regional Consultation Meeting for Europe Brussels, 13 November 2015

The UNEP Regional Consultation for Europe in preparation of the second session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-2) was held in Brussels on 13 November 2015. The meeting was organised in partnership with one of UNEP's long standing partners, European Environmental Bureau (EEB). The EEB is also accredited to UNEP as a non-governmental organization with observer status.

Civil society organisations<sup>1</sup> representing several Major Group constituencies, came together to discuss and contribute to the overall theme of UNEA-2 that focus on delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 sustainable development agenda, including the implementation of SDGs, and in particular on the themes of the UNEA high-level ministerial policy review devoted to "Healthy environment – healthy people" and the Symposium on "Mobilising resources for Sustainable Investments" – although RCM participants strongly felt the Symposium should be on "Mobilising resources for investment in Sustainable Development". Participants came from countries representing the European Union (EU) and Eastern Europe, Caucasus, and Central Asian (EECCA) . All organisations expressed their willingness to be actively involved in the UNEA-process (via myUNEA.org and other means available) and support the national implementation of the SDGs with active involvement in their respective countries.

### Outcome document of the discussions

### Joint position statement

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### "HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT - HEALTHY PEOPLE"

#### Environmental Health and the SDGs

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals are all interlinked, based on the evidence that only a balanced development with sustainable consumption, production and lifestyle patterns, and protecting people's health and the health of natural eco-systems, can ensure long term well being and survival of humanity.

When the environment is polluted and destroyed, the people dependent on the

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<sup>1</sup> See annex for the list of participating organisations

environment also suffer. A number of multilateral agreements and conventions already exist to phase out hazardous substances which cannot be safely used, such as mercury and asbestos, and for which safe alternatives exist.

These agreements protect people and the environment, but much more needs to be done to apply the precautionary principle and to avoid future environmental damage with irreversible health impacts on humans, animals and nature. For example, currently many daily-use products contain potential 'endocrine disrupting chemicals' which create life-long health damage, as well as many pesticides which are increasingly suspected of doing harm to human health, including birth defects and development of cancer.

UNEP plays an important role in developing guidelines for environmental health and coordinating the conventions addressing the substitution of hazardous substances, but as the SDGs have stated, much more needs to be done to ensure a healthy planet for healthy people.

*The Major Groups and Stakeholders from the European region have identified the following key recommendations for action on Environment and Health:*

### **Mercury**

- UNEA to call on countries who have not yet ratified to immediately ratify the Minamata Convention on Mercury
- UNEA to call on all countries to implement mercury reduction activities following the requirements of the Minamata Convention. Countries should make funding possibilities available, to support the ratification efforts; this could include work on preparing a mercury inventory, a legal gap analysis, and awareness raising activities, capacity building and promotion of good practices.
- Support should also be available for the development of a National Action Plan on Artisanal Small Scale Gold Mining, for the relevant countries to seek for.

### **SDGs and environmental health**

- UNEA to call on all countries to prepare assessments of the impact of existing programs, policies, subsidies, incentives etc., including identifying those conflicting with the SDGs, i.e. do an integrated assessment of environment, sustainability and health and how this approach can be taken in development planning processes
- Encourage UNEP to approach SDG integrally, by building on its 'integrated approach to environmental sustainability in development planning' initiatives at the national level.
- UNEA can take the lead to develop further accountability and compliance and implementation mechanisms (linking to the finance part of UNEA agenda)

### **Healthy ecosystem**

- UNEA to agree on a global program to integrate biodiversity and ecosystem protection into national health, economic, agriculture policies and investments, and to reduce the total environmental pressure on land use, including action plans to specifically:
  - Create a dietary shift towards low meat, locally and ecologically produced food, to reduce land and water use pressure as well as non communicable diseases (NCDs)

- Move to only organic local agriculture
- Work towards a transition of agricultural systems, including supporting farmers actively with subsidies for integrated pest management, producing organic products, animal welfare, and phase out all subsidies for industrial farming which will imply huge savings for the budget too.
- Social support for low-income population to access safe ecologically clean food, water and air. UNEP can play a major role here in addressing SDG 10 on reducing the growing inequalities we are confronted with in Europe

#### **Armed conflict impact remediation and prevention**

- Stress the role of UNEA regarding negative environmental impacts of armed conflict – building off from on its work on poaching and illegal logging (charcoal trade) – also coal mafia, oil mafia etc.
- Address the role of UNEA in facilitating preventive measures to reduce conflict when these are linked to land degradation, climate change, pollution, etc.
- Migration and refugees: address the role of UNEA in ensuring access to safe water, sanitation, safe natural resource management, for migrants, refugees and internal displaced peoples. Share knowledge and expertise in the field of migrant's vulnerability to climate change, and build capacity for resilience and early warning and response.

#### **Waste**

- UNEA to develop guidelines and an action plan to reduce waste, working towards eliminating waste landfilling and incineration globally – in order to reduce water and air pollution, in particular eliminating very hazardous as well as medical waste discharge to sewerage system as waste water treatment plants are unable to manage such pollutant in an environmentally sound manner.
- UNEA to develop recommendations for a binding international tax on chemical and pharmaceutical sales for clean up and health protection (this is an existing proposal SAICM – like Tobin tax, a 0,001% tax on total turnover achieving 4 billion Euro or so annually)
- UNEA to agree as part of the financing of the SDGs to strict application of polluter pays principle, including obligatory insurance of all economic activities that have a negative impact on environment and health.
- Recognise responsibility of Member States and corporations also to pay for future clean up as well as clean up of old liabilities in particular the toxic chemicals such as PCBs and old pesticides, mercury from small scale gold mining and other extractive industry pollution

#### **Equitable and coherent policies to protect environmental health**

- Add specific sex- and age-disaggregated indicators to be added to the basic global SDG indicators so that specific vulnerability of women, children, (e.g. early life exposure to Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals in daily products and pesticides) and elderly people are addressed

- Link UNEP’s Gender GEO and the GEO6 Chapter on “Healthy Planet, Healthy People” to the global monitoring of SDGs effort to ensure greatest coherence and engagement of all sectors.
- UNEP to be given the mandate and resources to ensure that at country level civil society is meaningfully participating in environmental and SDG policy development, investment planning and implementation.
- UNEP to increase its engagement with major groups of civil society, and in particular further strengthen its involvement with women, youth and indigenous peoples groups not only because they are more vulnerable but also as agents of change and leaders in transformation.

### **Research and pro-active awareness raising and advocacy**

- UNEP to support Civil Society Organisations and Environmental NGOs with strong ‘advertising’ campaigns which warn – just as with anti smoking messages – about the hazards of burning coal in chimneys, mercury in fish, of EDCs in plastic, food, toys and cosmetics etc. and that contained in the link it is made very clearly to people that they are responsible for their own health, (e.g. your risk of heart attack).
- Make the co-benefits of environment and health very clear: longer and healthier lives thanks to clean environment, more resilient communities against climate and other natural disasters, value of nature for mental and emotional health, etc.
- UNEP to further integrate the values of environmental education and education for sustainable development in the implementation of environmental dimensions of the SDGs and in its programme of work in order to creating social, economic and environmental capital.
- Raise awareness on and support the participation of civil society in the implementation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), including the use of InforMEA e-learning tools.

### **Increase trans-boundary cooperation and good governance**

- Support Programs to work in border regions (similar to Interreg) on common pollution (water, air, mountain etc).
- Convince the Member States to halt the deregulation and cancelling of environmental legislation and legal tools, based on the rationale that it is undertaken to fight corruption or good for the economy. On the contrary we need to promote more legal frameworks
- Promote and build on inter-sectoral partnerships based on green economy, environment and health, CCAC, etc good practices

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## **“MOBILISING RESOURCES FOR INVESTMENT IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT”**

### **“Mobilising resources for Sustainable Investments**

The Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 tackle global issues that require a harmonised and cross-sectoral (government, business, finance and civil society) mobilisation of resources. At the Regional Consultation Meeting for Europe, the results of the UNEP

Inquiry<sup>2</sup> were welcomed, and representatives from the Major Groups formulated key-recommendations for priority actions that member states at UNEA-2 can request of UNEP to undertake. Where relevant, the recommendations are annotated with the relevant Sustainable Development Goals.

The Major Groups in European countries urge UNEA 2 to take the next step and develop a global and harmonised regulatory approach for mobilising resources for investments in Sustainable Development, and for demobilising resources invested in unsustainable developments. Regrettably, unsustainable behaviour is often left rewarded as it rides freely and unfairly on the benefits of those in the corporate and financial community that do choose to adopt sustainable strategies.

*As such different major groups from the European Region recommend that member states at UNEA-2 ask UNEP to develop harmonised instruments in the following areas:*

### **Public Finance: Subsidies and Taxation**

In line with Sustainable Development Goals and their subsequent targets (2.b, 7, 12.c, 13.a, 14.6, 17.14) as well as paragraph 31 Of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (A/CONF.227/L.1), member states at UNEA-2 should aim to:

- Stop public finance flows to unsustainable practices.
- Stop the subsidisation of fossil fuel exploration and use, and redirect subsidies in favour of renewable energy forms.
- Replace the subsidisation of other unsustainable practices in favour of sustainable alternatives.
- Enable developing countries to increase their income from taxation, by eliminating the use of tax-havens and other tax-avoidance mechanisms by multi-national enterprises.
- Installation of a global intergovernmental tax body.
- Increase the green taxation policies in Global North and South.

### **Multi-stakeholder and Public Private Partnerships**

In line with SDG 17, targets 16 and 17, seek and determine the conditions for effective and optimized partnerships, multi-stakeholder as well as Public Private Partnerships, where it is recommended further:

- That the aim of these partnerships is to leverage private investment for sustainable practices in line with the Sustainable Development goals and targets. In designing them, it is imperative that roles between public and private finance be made absolutely clear.
- To, based on the Bali Guiding Principles on partnerships (WSSD and CSD 11), and in conjunction with the ongoing work on partnerships at the UN, (UNDESA and ECOSOC), further contribute to formulate principles on partnerships at the global level that will enable the above. This should include accountability mechanisms.
- To encourage that these set of principles for partnerships once agreed on by member states, be utilized also at the nation-state level.

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<sup>2</sup> United Nations Environment Program, "The Financial System We Need", 2015

### **Trade, if fair and green.**

The participants stated that all need to recognise the importance and potential of trade as a source of resources for sustainable investments, especially in the East and in the Global South, and therefore that member states at UNEA-2:

- Ensure that in the process of trading that there is a full respect for the environment, and that trade should not violate any of the principles or rights expressed in the Universal Declaration on Human Rights.
- Ensure that trade will support the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- Ensure that all trade practices are based on principles of good governance, such as transparency, accountability and the rule of law.
- Request that negotiations in the framework of the WTO will explicitly contribute to eliminating unsustainable trade and material and financial flows, and encourage only trade flows that support sustainable development; Regional trade and investment negotiations need to be transparent and also totally in line with all SDGs.

### **Governance based on vision, not in reaction to environmental disaster**

Conclusions from the UNEP Inquiry on design of a sustainable Financial System – called “The Financial System we need” as published in October 2015, tell us that the financial and corporate community are willing to incorporate sustainability concerns in their investment decisions. This behaviour is induced by the fact that companies and financial investors worldwide are experiencing the impacts of the disruptive effects of ecosystem degradation and climate change on their operations. The major groups believe that a pro-active approach will be more cost-efficient to the economy and will cause less (irreversible) damage to nature. Member states at UNEA-2 should therefore:

- Pro-actively anticipate the disruptive effects of climate change, ecosystem degradation and therefore choose to regulate unsustainable behaviour. This will prevent that changes in the financial sector and in the private sector will only occur as a result of environmental disaster and at high cost and not as a result of a positive and sustainable vision.
- Provide UNEP with a mandate to support a global dialogue on strengthening the regulatory framework in favour of sustainable development.
- As the effects of climate change and ecosystem degradation become clear, and are felt at the company and investor level, request UNEP to implement an educational campaign to inform business and finance of the impacts of environmental degradation on their balance sheet – building onwards on the work of TEEB, UNEP FI, the Natural Capital Coalition and the Natural Capital Declaration.
- Considering the increasing scarcity of resource flows to development cooperation across the world, UNEP should strive to mobilize additional resources for the implementation of environmental dimensions of the SDGs and its programme of work from private sector in line with the UN principles.

### **Election of Regional Representatives for UNEA-2:**

As UNEP provides the opportunity to two civil society representatives per region to engage in its processes (in addition to the more general opportunities available to all MGS

representatives), elections were held on who would have that responsibility for UNEA-2. The current Regional Representatives Leida Rijnhout (ANPED/EEB) and Olga Ponizova (EcoAccord) stepped down. The election process and criteria for candidates were discussed:

- Candidates will have an observer role for the upcoming UNEA-2 for the region, and will therefore align with the regional outcome document. They will coordinate with the Major Group Facilitating Committee (MGFC)
- Candidates should invest time and energy in the preparations of the UNEA-2 meeting, mobilise and support the facilitation of civil society inputs from the region, together with the MGFC.
- It was agreed that both geographical and gender balance were desirable in the selection of candidates but that since the overall gender balance would be affected by the gender of the candidates put forward from the other regions and given the clear political differences between the eastern and western parts of the 'European+' region, priority should be given to ensuring geographical balance within the region as this could not be compensated by other regions. It was therefore agreed that one candidate would be chosen from the East and one from the West, and gender could be taken into account when making nominations and voting. While it was recognized that there could be different views as to whether certain countries were East or West, it was agreed not to define this precisely but rather to leave it to candidates putting themselves forward to identify which 'seat' they wished to stand for.

Following this agreement on the procedure, several candidates presented themselves, and after the voting the meeting came with the following result:

Eastern seat: Olga Ponizova (re-elected) EcoAccord Russia

Western seat: Jouni Nissinen (new) Finnish Association for Nature Conservation (FANC)

List of participants:

First Name	Last Name	Organisation
Eva	Izquierdo	EEB
Jeremy	Wates	EEB
Matteo	Carnevale	Free lance
Leida	Rijnhout	EEB
Natasa	Kovacevic	NGO Green Home
Richard	Filcak	EEB
Lena	Bratic	Center for Energy Efficiency
Sadig	Hasanov	NGO of "Ecolife"
Giorgia	Manno	ENI
Svitlana	Slesarenok	NGO Black Sea Women's Club
Andriy-Taras	Bashta	Association "Fauna"
Jurciuc	Liudmila	NGO "Terra-1530"
Gohar	Khojayan	Armenian Women for Health and Healthy Environment (AWHHE)
Olga	Kikou	Compassion in World Farming
Kateryna	Malkova	Information Center "Green Dossier", Charitable Organisation
Iryna	Usava	NGO "EKAPRAEKT"
Klara	Hajdu	CEEweb for Biodiversity
Hanna	Skryhan	NGO "ECOPROECT"
Nadezda	Kutepova	NGO The Planet of Hopes

Natasha	Dokovska	Journalists for human rights
Gabor	Figezky	IFOAM - Organics International
George	Tsolakis	Ecocity
Sally	Nicholson	WWF
frederique	holle	Women for Water Partnership
Ana	Barreira	IIDMA
Balazs	Horvath	European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
Tatiana	Lambin	WWF European Policy Office (EPO)
Jonida	Mamaj-Hafizi	EDEN (Env Center for Development Education and Networking)
Kravciuk	Kravciuk	Gutta-Club National Center
Jessica	Bezolles	AUGEO
Marta	Ruda	UNENGO "MAMA-86"
Yblin	Roman E.	EEB
Valters	Kinna	Green Liberty
Benoit	Lallemand	Finance Watch
Jan-Gustav	Strandenaes	Stakeholder Forum
Ann	Dom	Seas At Risk
Sarah	Baulch	Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)
Blerim	Burjani	Institute of Kosovo for Policy Development (IKPD)
Florije	Morina	Kosovar Institute for Rule of Law
Arthur	Dahl	International Environment Forum
Jouni	Nissinen	Kepa Finland/ the EEB
Diana	Iskrevja-Idigo	Women for Water Partnership
Giulia	Galli	Alten
Anouska	Plasmeijer	IUCN European Regional Office
Dusan	Jovic	Citizens for Europe
Natasa	Zugic-Drakulic	Environmental Ambassadors for Sustainable Development
Donna	Mullen	Irish Environmental Network
Victor	Usov	Russian National Committee for UNEP (UNEP/COM)
Sascha	Gabizon	WECF
Pieter	van der Gaag	Niet Onverschillig
Aneta	Holečková	Office Perm Mission of S Bohemia and the Hradec Králové Region
Sonia	Goicoechea	EEB
Elena	Lymberidi	EEB
Justin	Byrne	Irish Environmental Network
Lynn	Sundelius	European Bureau for Conservation & Development
Despina	Symons	EBCD
Konstantinos	Kokosis	European Bureau for Conservation and Development
Areti Maria	Kitsou	European Bureau for Conservation and Development
Lars	Mortensen	European Environmental Agency
Margarita	Korkhmazyan	Association for Sustainable Human Development
Sabina	Azhdarova	IDEA Public Union
Olga	Ponizova	Ecoforum
Stephen	Stec	Central European University Hungary
Meynen	Nick	EEB