

**GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY STEERING COMMITTEE AND GLOBAL DRAFTING EXERCISE, IN
THE CONTEXT OF THE UPCOMING 8TH GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM**

Background

Since 2000, UNEP organizes a yearly Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF), in conjunction with UNEP Governing Council / Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC / GMEF). This forum is the main entry point for civil society participation at governance level in the United Nations Environment Programme.

During odd years (e.g., 2001, 2003, 2005) UNEP convenes its Governing Council, which is the board of ministers from the countries governing UNEP. The Governing Council takes place at the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya. During even years (e.g., 2002, 2004, 2006) UNEP convenes special Sessions on the different continents (e.g., 2000 in Malmö, Sweden; 2002 in Cartagena, Colombia; 2004 in Seoul, Republic of Korea; 2006 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates). The Global Civil Society Forum is held just prior to the Governing Council or its special session, in the same venue.

Over the last years, the success of the (Global Civil Society Forum) GCSF was among others based on the following activities:

- Consultation meetings in each of the six regions;
- Establishment of an independent Civil Society Host Committee;
- Global drafting meeting to elaborate the GCSF statement well in advance; and
- Distribution of the outcomes of the regional preparatory meetings and GCSF statements in advance to Governments.

One major challenge is to further advance the implementation of Decision SSVII.5 according to which, the GCSF must be “*regionally balanced and representative*”. Other remaining challenges concern the necessity to engage and communicate more continuously and on a longer term with CSOs - among others through networks or umbrella organizations, and to increase the impact of the GCSF at the GC/GMEF, including through increased capacity.

To this end, a number of modalities have already been proposed to the regional offices, with a view to jointly improve the GCSF cycle and in particular the regional consultation meetings. Similarly, the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch proposes to review the modalities of the Civil Society Host Committee, as well as the Global drafting exercise.

Global Civil Society Committee

Over the last years, the Civil Society Committee was composed of a number of CS representatives from the hosting region. This organization was experienced in Africa in 2005 and in West Asia in 2006. The approach increased the ownership of the process in the regions, promoted in engagement of CS at governance level and fostered the continuous engagement of some members of the committee in particular in Africa. However, members of the CS committee were not elected by their CS peers. Furthermore, the regional nature of the committees did not foster inter-regional dialogue prior to and following the GCSF and did not address the need to have a GCSF “*regionally balanced and representative*”, per Decision SSVII.5.

Election of the Global Civil Society Committee

In this context, UNEP proposes to set up a Global Civil Society Committee, based on the following modalities:

- The global steering committee will include 2 representatives from each of the 6 UNEP regions

- Two representatives per region will be elected at the regional consultation meeting, with a view to include one male representative and one female representative at the same time as one representative from NGOs, and one representative from another of the 9 major groups
- The global steering committee members will be part of the elected CSO representatives that will be sponsored to attend the GCSF. In North America where there are no elected sponsored participants to attend the GCSF, the global steering committee members will be supported by raising funds in the region.
- This year, the chair of the global steering committee and of the GCSF will be elected among the two steering committee members from Africa at the regional consultation meeting. The name of the chair will then be shared at the 5 other regional consultation meetings, to take place after the African consultation meeting, except for Europe where it will be done by email
- The global steering committee will be active until the next one is established in 2007

Tasks and responsibilities of the Global Civil Society Committee

The proposed terms of reference of the Global Civil Society Committee are the following:

- Provide strategic guidance to CSOs in preparation to and as follow up to the GCSF and GC / GMEF
- Provide guidance to CSOs in regard to subjects and Governing Council decisions under discussion
- Share information with CSOs on the subjects at stake
- Provide guidance to CSOs in regard to UNEP governance processes
- Foster inter-regional, South-South and North-South exchange and dialogue prior to and following the GCSF
- Reach out on the GCSF cycle in the 6 UNEP regions
- Contribute to the definition of the agenda of the GCSF
- Draft the global civil society statement, based on the 6 regional civil society statements
- Foster the development of common positions on certain topics to be presented at the GCSF GC/GMEF, and that can be incorporated in the Governing Council decisions under discussion
- Liaise with UNEP in preparation to and as follow up to the GCSF and GC / GMEF
- Mobilizing CSOs in the 6 UNEP regions for the 2006-2007 and the 2007-2008 GCSF cycle, including promoting accreditation at UNEP Governing Council

The activities of the Global Civil Society Committee will be carried out in close consultation with CSOs in the regions, and in partnership with UNEP. Additional tasks and responsibilities should be proposed and discussed with UNEP prior to be launched.

Calendar of activities

The calendar of activities of the Global Civil Society Committee is described below:

Activity	Date
Election of the members of the Global Civil Society Committee	23 October -3 November 2006
Election of the chair of the Global Civil Society Committee and GCSF	26 October -3 November 2006
Drafting of the global civil society statement	By 1 December 2006
Definition of the agenda of the GCSF	By 1 December 2006

Development of common positions on certain topics	From 3 November 2006 to February 2007
Guidance to CSOs, inter-regional dialogue, information sharing, follow-up on the GCSF and GC / GMEF	From 3 November 2006 to fall 2007
Promote accreditation at UNEP GC	From 3 November 2006 to fall 2007
Handover to the new Global Civil Society Committee	Fall 2007

Communication and budget

The activities of the Global Civil Society Committee will be mainly executed through electronic media, such as e-mail discussions, on-line discussion forum, electronic newsletter, as well as through teleconferences.

The drafting of the Global Civil Society Statement, which was in the past done during a meeting, will be organized this year through e-mail exchanges and teleconferences, based on the 6 regional civil society statement. The budget foreseen for the drafting meeting (\$30,000) will be reallocated to support the various activities of the Global Civil Society Committee. UNEP will help organizing the drafting exercise, under the new modalities.