

African Major Groups Statement to the 10th Global Civil Society Forum and

25th Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF)

This statement is a synthesis of the recommendations of the Regional Consultation Meeting for Africa in preparation for the 10th Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF) which was held in Nairobi, Kenya, from 10th to 11th November 2008.

PREAMBLE

We, representatives of African Civil Society and Major Groups value UNEP's role in facilitating our participation in the preparation for the forthcoming 10th GCSF and 25th Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF):

- Recognize UNEP's appreciation of the role of civil society in enhancing environmental sustainability and its endeavor to engage CSOs in its own work as well as its intentions for system wide reform to ensure coherent policy alignment
- Note with concern the persistent levels of poverty, environmental degradation and the threat and risks of climate change on our continent, and;
- Recognizing 'Decision 2' taken at the 12 Session of African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) in Johannesburg on climate change, for the development of
 - a common negotiating position on a comprehensive international climate change regime beyond 2012 and
 - a comprehensive framework of African climate change programmes and other support initiatives;
- Commit to work with our governments, UNEP and all stakeholders of environmental sustainability and urge all to give due regard to the following concerns and recommendations:

We recommend that:

I. Climate change

1. African responses are met with decisive support from UNEP's Governing Council through the provision of meaningful resources (eg: Adaptation Fund) aimed at supporting vulnerable communities, conservation projects, technology transfer and the promotion of alternative technological options to facilitate the transition to a "low" carbon economy as well as the development of policy and regulatory frameworks to support this process at all levels
2. The participation of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and other stakeholders is integrated in finding practical responses to climate change.
3. Governments adopt technology screening (for environmental impacts), standardization measures and provide for the commercialization and financing or to subsidise renewable energy technologies or put in place tax incentives for environmentally-friendly technologies: set-up taxation and tariffs systems for new sources of energy, e.g. to encourage power utilities to invest in climate-friendly technologies.
4. The vulnerability of African indigenous and local communities is addressed with urgency and the implementation of National Adaptation Programmes of Action (NAPAs) is accelerated.

II. Disasters and Conflicts

1. Governments in consultation with local stakeholders minimize threats to human well being from the environmental causes and consequences of existing and potential natural and man made disasters through: continued research, rapid and reliable environmental disasters and post conflicts assessments; capacity building in environmental management; monitoring and evaluation of interventions; and development of policies for involvement of insurance firms in environmental disasters preparedness and compensation of victims.

III. Ecosystem Management

1. The capacity of countries is enhanced to increasingly integrate and utilize an ecosystem management approach into development and planning processes and to recognize the intrinsic value of the environment, and financially value the ecosystem.
2. The acknowledgment of property and human rights; recognition of indigenous knowledge of indigenous and local communities and respect the rights of the holders of that knowledge.

IV. Environmental Governance

1. Environmental governance at all levels is strengthened to address agreed environmental priorities and that capacities of States are enhanced to implement their environmental obligations and achieve their environmental priority goals, targets and objectives through strengthened laws and institutions.
2. The UN respects the mandate of each entity, promoting synergies, coherence in international decision-making processes related to the environment, and find more legally binding instruments for compliance.
3. Improved access by national and international stakeholders to sound science and policy advice for decision-making.
4. Inclusion of CSOs in official national delegations to UNEP processes and that partnerships between Government and CSOs are enhanced to build synergy and effectiveness in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
5. Education, training and rights awareness across the board to empower communities to demand for environmentally friendly services is Governments adopt technology screening (for environmental impacts), standardization measures and provide for the commercialization and financing or to subsidise renewable energy technologies or put in place tax incentives for environmentally-friendly technologies: set-up taxation and tariffs systems for new sources of energy, e.g. to encourage power utilities to invest in climate-friendly technologies.

V. Harmful Substances and Hazardous Waste

1. Governments to minimize the impact of harmful substances and hazardous waste on the environment and human well being by: increased capacities across the board and financing of States and other stakeholders to assess, manage and reduce risks to human health and the environment pollution posed by chemicals and hazardous waste.
2. Governments ratify and operationalise international conventions and agreement obligations in States and other stakeholders machineries and localise technical advice for development of control systems to manage harmful chemicals and hazardous waste in a more environmentally sound manner, including adoption of better technologies and best practices.
3. Promoting and encouraging the disposal of waste and effluents including Mercury in environmentally-sound ways.
4. Packaging and dissemination of information in appropriate and understandable formats to facilitate education, awareness and capacity building to create clear understanding.

VI. Resource efficiency and sustainable consumption and production

1. Increased investment in efficient, clean and safe industrial production methods through public policies and private sector action but also efficient use of resources and pollution reduction over product life cycles and along supply chains.
2. Consumer choice favors more resource efficient and environmentally friendly products
3. The development of national programmes involving local stakeholders and supported by UNEP that advocate for greener lifestyles

VII. Cross Cutting recommendations

1. UNEP work in partnership with CSOs and Major groups to implement UNEPs Programme of action and that these partnerships are based on the principle of equity
2. Gender recognition and integration in policy and programme design and implementation;
3. The closing of the gap between policy makers, implementers and the communities which is experienced as a serious disconnect
4. We urge all stakeholders to participate in the push for a green economy and to halt environmental degradation.