

Establishing sub-regional CSO platforms in Asia and the Pacific

1. Background

- The Global Civil Society Forum in Monaco in February 2008 and its previous sessions encouraged improved dialogue on issues of importance to UNEP, such as the MTS thematic areas.
- Enhanced civil society engagement and effective platforms for discussion/networking was an outcome of Asia Pacific regional civil society consultations. It was perceived that a single regional civil society meeting hosted by UNEP and EPLC (RoK) would be more representative only if it involved wider CSO participation.
- ROAP has five distinct sub-regions, where there are commonalities of environmental issues, challenges, and opportunities. Reinforcement of sub-regional civil society consultations was identified as a mechanism for enhancing civil society engagement in the Asia Pacific region,

2. Proposal

- At the ninth session of the GCSF in Monaco, the Asia Pacific regional representatives (Lam/Ellen/Masanori/Deo) met to discuss the idea of establishing sub-regional civil society platforms in Asia and the Pacific. They strongly supported the notion of seeking UNEP assistance in establishing and underpinning such a platform. The ideas discussed included:
 1. Set up sub-regional CSO platforms, which could initially be Internet based. This would facilitate discussion on a sub-regional and regional basis but at the same time enhance CSO participation at the sub-regional level in this process.
 2. Identify focal points in each sub-region who could facilitate this dialogue and manage the process at sub-regional level. These focal points could complement other national/sub-regional focal points, such as UNEP's youth networks. Each focal point may require some seed funding to consolidate sub-regional networks.
 3. The sub-regional focal points may have a process of formally identifying and selecting representatives to the annual regional civil society meeting, on the basis of equity, gender and other guidelines of UNEP.
 4. The agenda for discussion at the sub-regional level could be along the identified areas for UNEP GCSF and the regional consultations, as well as to discuss emerging environmental issues. These sub-regional views can then be represented at the annual regional consultation meeting. The proposed platform will also provide a vehicle for the elected representatives of the GCSF (Asia Pacific) to communicate and network within the region.
 5. At the annual regional meetings, the possibility of organizing focused capacity building programmes on priority themes (one day) is very much welcomed.

3. Next steps

- This concept note will be floated for discussion with UNEP and GCSF representatives. (Jan'09)
- The final proposal draft will be discussed in the Green Room on the margins of the GCSF. (Feb'09)
- Once the concept is approved, discussions will be held with UNEP on focal point identification and cost/management issues. (Feb-March'09)
- Formal establishment at the 2009 Regional Civil Society Meeting. (Nov'09)