

**United Nations Environment Programme  
North American Regional Civil Society Consultation  
In Preparation for the 8th Global Civil Society Forum and the  
24th UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum**

**Co-Facilitators' Summary<sup>1</sup>**

**I. Background**

1. This is the Co-Facilitators' Summary of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) North American Regional Civil Society Consultation, which was held in Washington, D.C. on 2-3 November 2006. The regional civil society consultations are intended to provide input into the upcoming 24th Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) to be held in February 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya. The North American Civil Society Consultation was convened by the UNEP Regional Office of North America (RONA) and hosted by the United Nations Foundation.

2. The GC/GMEF is an annual meeting of the world's environment ministers. The 2007 GC/GMEF will focus on four main policy issues: (1) globalization, ecosystem services, and human wellbeing; (2) gender and the environment; (3) water and the environment; and (4) chemicals management. Immediately preceding the GC/GMEF will be a Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF), which will present an opportunity to integrate the perspectives and experiences of civil society into the ensuing discussions at the GC/GMEF.

3. The purpose of the 2-3 November Consultation was to brief North American civil society organizations on the four main policy issues and to enable a discussion among participants that would result in a set of recommendations to include in a North American Regional Civil Society Statement. The Consultation included introductory remarks, a brief report on the February 2006 GCSF held in Dubai, and presentations regarding each of the four main policy issues, followed by discussion among the participants. The Consultation then broke into working groups that focused on each main policy issue and made reports that were discussed in the context of preparing the North American Regional Civil Society Statement. A copy of the Consultation agenda is attached to this Co-Facilitators' Summary as Annex 1.

**II. Introductory Remarks**

4. Mr. Richard Moss of the United Nations Foundation (UNF) opened the Consultation by welcoming participants on behalf of UNF and saying that this is exactly the kind of process that UNF likes to support. Mr. Moss encouraged participants to

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<sup>1</sup> The Co-Facilitators were Tom Hammond, Senior Program Advisor, International Union for the Conservation of Nature (Canada), and Glenn Wiser, Senior Attorney, Center for International Environmental Law (USA).

consider the connections between climate change and the respective areas on which they work.

5. Ms. Brennan Van Dyke, UNEP Regional Director of North America, welcomed participants on behalf of UNEP and thanked UNF for its support. Ms. Van Dyke commented that UNEP's new director, Achim Steiner, is pushing further to engage UNEP with civil society. Ms. Van Dyke stated that UNEP needs to partner with civil society in support of the work of national environment ministers and she invited the participants to take this call seriously. Stating that "civil society is often the incubator of great ideas," Ms. Van Dyke reminded the participants that the purpose of the Regional Civil Society Consultation is to talk about the upcoming GC/GMEF and to prepare for the GCSF. Ms. Van Dyke provided a brief overview of the four main policy issues and some of the procedures for compiling the North American Regional Civil Society Statement.

6. Mr. Glenn Wiser, Senior Attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) and Co-Facilitator of the Consultation, offered additional introductory remarks. He stated that the ultimate purpose of the meeting was to prepare a North American Civil Society Statement that would serve as input to the Global Civil Society Statement, which will be presented to ministers at the GC/GMEF. He reviewed the Consultation's agenda and invited participants to introduce themselves to the group.

7. Mr. Wiser then introduced Ms. Kate Davenport, who attended the February 2006 Global Civil Society Forum in Dubai, United Arab Emirates as one of the four North American civil society representatives. Ms. Davenport discussed the role of civil society in clarifying issues for governments, the need for civil society to understand government perspectives before lobbying government officials, and the importance of identifying lobbying points and lobbying targets. Ms. Davenport explained the process that led to the UNEP Major Groups Division decision to propose a year-round Global Civil Society Committee.

### **III. Introduction to the Main Policy Issues to Be Addressed at the GC/GMEF**

#### **A. Globalization, Ecosystem Services, and Human Wellbeing**

8. Ms. Hilary French of UNEP RONA introduced this topic by explaining that it had been added in response to a request from the Danish Government after Achim Steiner assumed leadership of UNEP in June 2006. Thus, the background papers for the topic were still being prepared. Ms. French noted the challenge of integrating the three themes of this topic into a coherent whole, while identifying some of the opportunities and risks stemming from the agenda item.

9. Co-Facilitator Tom Hammond introduced Ms. Cecilia Repinski of the World Resources Institute (WRI). Ms. Repinski discussed the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), which is a comprehensive five-year study on the health of Earth's ecosystems and biodiversity. She explained that the MA reviewed 24 categories within three groups of benefits to human beings: (1) provisioning services, (2) regulating

services, and (3) cultural services. Ms. Repinski indicated that the majority of services have been degraded, with service enhancements identified only in agriculture and carbon sequestration.

10. Ms. Repinski highlighted several important findings in the MA, including: the increasing costs of degraded ecosystems; how ecosystem changes have led to unexpected catastrophic changes; tradeoffs between the three groups of ecosystem services; how increasing international financial flows since the 1990s have sped globalization; and that the poor are hit the hardest when globalization leads to degraded ecosystems. Finally, Ms. Repinski presented some of the activities her organization, the World Resources Institute, has pursued in this area.

11. **Discussion.** Participants exchanged views, focusing on procedural issues regarding the GCSF and the importance of the North American Regional Civil Society Statement. Thoughts were offered on improving civil society engagement with UNEP. Ms. Van Dyke mentioned that UNEP is setting up joint UNEP/UNDP centers to address poverty and the environment and there is a need to present opportunities such as green GNP, payment for ecosystem services, and environmental certification programs. Finally, participants discussed strategies for civil society to lobby governments on globalization issues and the need to combine both concrete and abstract analysis of these issues.

## **B. Gender and the Environment**

12. Tom Hammond introduced Ms. Betsy Apple of the Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), who provided an overview of the topic. Ms. Apple discussed UNEP Governing Council Decision 23/11 on Gender and the Environment and the difficulties and opportunities for achieving this "new day" in gender equality. Ms. Apple indicated that this decision was adopted with the view that achieving women's rights will lead to ancillary environmental benefits.

13. Ms. Caron Whitaker of the National Wildlife Federation (NWF) provided additional perspectives, including a report on recent foreign policy changes of the U.S. State Department regarding "Transformational Diplomacy." Transformational Diplomacy is based on five key objectives: (a) peace and security, (b) governing justly, (c) investing in people, (d) economic growth, and (e) humanitarian assistance. Ms. Whitaker observed that the new U.S. Foreign Assistance Strategy (based on Transformational Diplomacy objectives) will be as comprehensive and focused as, for example, the U.S. National Security Strategy. She stated that the State Department has placed environmental issues under the "economic growth" sector in the new strategy, and the "gender" sector is now considered "mainstreamed," so that it will not be considered as a discrete issue.

14. Ms. Apple then provided a detailed presentation on UNEP and gender. She observed that: (a) gender is a cross-sectoral issue that often gets mainstreamed into invisibility; (b) the essential issue of gender and the environment is equitable access to, and control over, natural resources; (c) gender equality is the goal, and gender equity is

the means; and (d) gender consideration concerns both women and men. Ms. Apple explained that there is a long history of United Nations resolutions on gender, but that UNEP history has been one of gender rhetoric without action. Nonetheless, gender appears to be receiving renewed emphasis at UNEP from its new director, Achim Steiner. Ms. Apple explained that her organization, WEDO, prepared an analysis for UNEP identifying the deficiencies of Decision 23/11, such as its failure to develop gender-disaggregated data and analysis. Acknowledging some of the deficiencies of the decision, UNEP worked with WEDO to develop the Global Gender Plan of Action to guide UNEP in the effective implementation of Decision 23/11. Ms. Apple also remarked that UNEP needs to apply gender equitable decision-making internally, both at headquarters and in regional offices.

15. **Discussion.** Various comments were made in response to the presentations, particularly focusing on the needs for increased financial resources in this sector and greater specificity in gender-environment programs and partnerships. Ms. Apple noted that statistics prove that women are stewards of the majority of the world's natural resources.

### **C. Water and the Environment**

16. Ms. Brennan Van Dyke of UNEP RONA briefed the conference on the water resource "roadmap" for meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) on water. This roadmap concept, developed by Denmark and referred to as Integrated Water Resource Management (IWRM), entails (a) an ecosystem approach, (b) a role for UNEP on transboundary resources when all relevant nation states agree to it, and (c) incorporation of the draft Updated Water Policy and Strategy of UNEP, 2007-2012. Ms. Van Dyke also noted that UNEP is hiring two P4-level professionals to work on water issues and is expanding its water programs in regional offices.

17. Co-Facilitator Tom Hammond introduced Karen Krchnak of The Nature Conservancy, who discussed the Updated Water Policy and Strategy of UNEP, 2007-2012. Ms. Krchnak explained that this UNEP document was an effort to implement in detail UNEP's water program, but that some government officials may believe it is too similar to the previous five-year plan and has not, in fact, included changes mandated by Decision 23/2. Ms. Krchnak noted several apparent ambiguities in the UNEP document, and she identified categories of concern that the UNEP water policy covers. She pointed out that the worldwide water situation is extremely complex (often involving antiquated legal regimes and treatment systems) and that the world suffers from inefficient water use, pollution, public health problems associated with poor water quality, and natural water disasters.

18. Ms. Krchnak provided insights on some of the constructive roles that NGOs might play in UNEP's water policy efforts and she noted the need to achieve a proper balance between economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability. She explained that most IWRM plans "fall short on the environment side," so UNEP needs to get more involved in implementing them. She ended her presentation by suggesting a number of ways in which UNEP might help to overcome the challenges of international

water policy implementation, including (a) raising UNEP's profile, (b) developing innovative conservation mechanisms for freshwater protection, (c) building capacity, (d) gathering better data and generating better assessments, (e) integrating planning processes that link water and poverty reduction, and (f) reforming government networks to focus on ecosystem issues.

19. Mr. Rick Findlay of Pollution Probe provided a history of his organization and then a background on current Canadian water policy reform predicated on a series of public meetings recently held across Canada. Mr. Findlay conceptualized the issues of (a) ecosystem services valuation, (b) capacity building, and (c) integrated watershed management. He then talked about his idea for a capacity-building watershed management training center to be located somewhere in the Great Lakes region, which could be organized as a bi-national U.S.-Canada center based on a century of joint water basin management experience.

20. Ms. Melanie Nakagawa of Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC) provided additional commentary. She began by asserting the need to focus on priorities where UNEP can add value. She noted the distinction between local water issues and broader water policy concerns and suggested that the MDGs could be achieved through properly conceived and implemented water policies. Ms. Nakagawa stated there is a need to determine who in UNEP is responsible for water policy, and she suggested that UNEP should identify and prioritize major threats. Finally, she identified the need for political will to improve international organizational arrangements to achieve water policy goals.

21. **Discussion.** Ms. Van Dyke clarified that the primary UNEP driver on water is the Division of Environmental Policy Implementation, but that water work involves several different UNEP divisions. Ms. Krchnak said that the GC/GMEF water agenda item will focus, in part, on getting ministries of environment engaged in water work. Mr. Findlay clarified his concept for a capacity-building framework: (a) education, training, and awareness raising; (b) development of effective regulatory and compliance systems; (c) monitoring, research, evaluation, and performance; and (d) infrastructure and delivery. Ms. Nakagawa commented that UNEP's small projects need to be scaled up. Other participants said that UNEP needs a sense of urgency and to be "forward thinking," and that the poor need water solutions more urgently than they do other environmental improvements. Several participants discussed the overlap of water programs among "too many" international organizations, with some disagreement on whether more coordination with UNEP is possible. Finally, one participant noted that the current UNEP water strategy is inadequate for small island states, which need to focus constantly on integrating watershed and coastal management.

#### **D. Chemicals Management**

22. Ms. Brennan Van Dyke introduced the topic by providing a synopsis of the relevant background documents and her expectations for the GC/GMEF. She explained that UNEP did not prepare a draft decision on chemicals for the Governing Council. The section on synergies was expected to be redundant with previous international agreements. If there is any discussion about the Strategic Approach to International

Chemicals Management (SAICM), it will probably concern financing. Cadmium, lead, and mercury would likely prove to be controversial. Ms. Van Dyke commented that UNEP realizes it has not been active enough in developing partnerships in the chemicals management sector. She also noted that, based on the recent outcome of the Fifth Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) in Budapest, UNEP expects a push by some countries for a convention on mercury or on heavy metals in general.

23. Co-Facilitator Glenn Wiser identified the two presenters on chemicals management issues, Daryl Ditz of CIEL and Susan Keane of NRDC. Mr. Ditz described the existing chemicals treaties that collectively comprise the “chemicals cluster”; namely, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPS), the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals in International Trade, and the Basel Convention on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes. Mr. Ditz pointed out that there are many omissions in the coverage of these treaties, including heavy metals; that the financial resources they provide for implementation are inadequate; and that the United States has failed to ratify them. Mr. Ditz discussed the SAICM process, noting that it is not a legally binding treaty, but rather, a political commitment to achieve the 2020 target to minimize significant adverse effects of chemicals production and use. Mr. Ditz summarized some national and regional efforts to implement the SAICM, including the European Union’s pending REACH legislation, Canada’s review of existing chemicals, and U.S. actions at the state level.

24. Susan Keane of NRDC commented on international developments related to heavy metals. She identified three metals of international concern—mercury, lead, and cadmium. For each of these metals she discussed the quantities used annually around the world, their most common uses (including by-product processes and dumping in the guise of “recycling” to lesser developed countries), and their toxicological effects. Ms. Keane described strategies for supply and demand reduction and the need for carefully calibrated reduction strategies to avoid unintended effects. She then reviewed the Governing Council’s past policy actions on metals, and she stressed the need for (a) elimination of lead in gasoline, (b) substitution of less toxic materials, (c) a manufacturing life cycle approach, and (d) promotion of appropriate waste management and recycling techniques. Regarding mercury, Ms. Keane indicated that numerous public interest organizations have endorsed adoption of a globally binding mercury agreement supported by new and additional financial resources. Regarding lead, she commented that UNEP has had a successful partnership to reduce lead in gasoline, but work is still needed in other sectors. Ms. Keane concluded by suggesting that, because scientific reports have documented the high toxicity of cadmium, UNEP should call for specific action on cadmium now.

25. **Discussion.** Responding to questions, Mr. Ditz said that the priority needs in chemicals management are: (a) political will, (b) participation by civil society, and (c) adequate long-term funding and implementation. One participant said that mercury partnerships were set up in 2005 with the idea that developed countries would fund mercury reduction in least developed countries, but the partnerships have failed to contribute to a comprehensive approach for reducing supply and demand simultaneously.

Mr. Wisner noted the negative perception held by some NGOs that the U.S. Government has used mercury partnerships as a way to deflect calls for an overarching, global approach to dealing with the problem. Mr. Ditz stated that “the jury is still out” as to whether SAICM can achieve the “type of practicality” that would result in synergies among all of the initiatives in the chemicals cluster. Ms. Keane commented that UNIDO has been working to control small-scale gold mining operations which have used massive quantities of mercury in the past. Regarding chemicals in the workplace, one participant commented that allowable levels of many chemicals are far higher than those permitted to be released into the environment, while another participant said that labor unions around the world are coalescing on chemicals management issues, as well as some other groups such as medical associations and insurers. Other discussion topics included prior informed consent regarding indigenous groups, legal and illegal trade in mercury, concrete ideas on whether SAICM can achieve traction, and mercury emissions from coal-fired power plants.

#### **IV. Working Group Break-out Sessions**

26. Co-Facilitator Glenn Wisner directed the formation of Working Groups for each of the four main issues. After announcing the Co-Chairs of each Working Group, he requested each group to produce approximately one page of bulleted recommendations, which would be incorporated into the North American Civil Society Statement. Mr. Wisner explained that, as in previous years, a footnote would be added to the Statement to clarify that participating organizations do not necessarily endorse every point in the Statement. Participants then separated into their respective Working Groups, which met in parallel for the next two and one half hours. After a working lunch, the Working Groups reconvened in plenary to report on their respective deliberations.

#### **V. Reports from the Working Groups**

27. **Water and the Environment.** Mr. Rick Findlay (Pollution Probe) reported on behalf of the Water and the Environment Working Group. He said that the group called for UNEP to take a leadership role in measuring the water quality of watersheds and the development of effective infrastructure. Moreover, alliances should be encouraged for capacity-building. UNEP could facilitate a meaningful knowledge exchange by more robust oversight of environmental indicators and tapping existing partnerships. In the ensuing discussion, some participants noted (a) the lack of mention in the report of conflict prevention or linkages to desertification, (b) various needed language clarifications, and (c) the need to expand the text regarding “integral actors.”

28. **Chemicals Management.** Mr. Daryl Ditz (CIEL) and Ms. Susan Keane (NRDC) reported on behalf of the Chemicals Management Working Group. They noted the group’s emphasis on the importance of solidifying a strong North American ethical and moral responsibility in support of sound management of chemicals. They also reported that the group noted its special concern regarding metals. The group suggested enhanced UNEP collaboration on chemicals with various international organizations such as WHO and the ILO. Additionally, the group urged (a) full international support for the implementation of SAICM, (b) development of a binding international instrument on

heavy metals, (c) meeting a global mercury reduction goal of 70 % by 2017, (d) dedicating new financial resources to developing nations for enhanced metals management, (e) encouraging international industry to adopt life cycle chemicals management approaches, and (f) expanding and strengthening the Stockholm POPs and Rotterdam PIC Conventions. Consultation participants offered various comments, including a suggestion that SAICM's "priority focus" should now be redirected to regional actors.

29. **Gender and the Environment.** Ms. Betsy Apple (WEDO) and Ms. Caron Whitaker (NWF) reported on behalf of the Gender and Environment Working Group. They stated that the group urged: (a) the endorsement of UNEP's Gender Plan of Action to carry out UNEP GC Decision 23/11, (b) a commitment of adequate funding from the Governing Council for UNEP to do the job, (c) consistent external and internal UNEP policies on gender and the environment, and (d) strengthening existing partnerships with UNEP. In response to a question about annexing the Gender Plan of Action to the Working Group's report, Ms. Apple explained that it was probably unnecessary, but reference will be drawn to this document. Ms. Apple and Ms. Whitaker clarified that the Working Group called for UNEP to submit an adequate budget to the Governing Council, and then for the donors to meet it. There was also some discussion of how the benchmarks recommendation fit into the overall statement.

30. **Globalization, Ecosystem Services and the Environment.** John Sohn (WRI) delivered the report, which noted the need for more precise and careful definitions of key terminology, including "ecosystem services" and "globalization." The group acknowledged the need for North American civil society to provide leadership on this issue. The Working Group suggested three categories of recommendations: (1) better analytical tools, (2) enhanced informational exchanges, and (3) more robust engagement of the nine major groups of civil society. Some specific ideas along these lines included: helping national environmental ministers to better engage with other ministers and with lateral institutions, such as the World Bank - developing a clearinghouse of best practices, and conducting an environmental impact study of global commodity trading. Consultation participants offered various comments, including (a) the lack of discussion of "best practices," climate change, or extreme events such as Hurricane Katrina in the draft statement; (b) the need to balance economic factors with environmental factors in evaluation; (c) the need for clarification of UNEP's internal processes; and (d) the need for clarifications in the ecosystem services text.

## **VI. Discussion of North American Civil Society Statement and Election of Representatives to the Global Civil Society Committee and the February 2007 Global Civil Society Forum**

31. Co-Facilitator Glenn Wiser expressed pleasure with the outputs of the Working Groups. He then provided an overview of the process for developing and finalizing the North American Civil Society Statement, and gave specific instructions and a time table to the Working Group Co-Chairs regarding the completion of their respective texts. He informed participants that they would all have an opportunity to review and comment upon the draft Statement, and he added that he and Tom Hammond would incorporate

any suggestions received or explain their decision not to do so. Ms. Hilary French (UNEP) explained that the deadlines were strict in order to comply with the requirements of the United Nations system regarding translation of official documents.

32. Next, Mr. Wiser turned to the matter of electing the North American representatives. He informed the conference that it needed to elect four representatives: two to participate in the Global Civil Society Committee and an additional two who would join the Committee in attending the Global Civil Society Forum and GC/GMEF in Nairobi, Kenya, in February 2007. Mr. Wiser explained that the two individuals elected as Committee Members would participate in drafting the Global Statement, and that their attendance in Nairobi would be supported by travel grants from UNEP. In addition, those two individuals would be expected to serve on the Committee throughout the coming year, until the next election. The other two representatives in Nairobi would be Resource Persons for the two UNEP-requested topics of (1) Globalization, Ecosystem Services, and Human Wellbeing and (2) Gender and the Environment. These two Resource Persons would receive travel grants from the Heinrich Böll Foundation. Ms. French reiterated that RONA had been requested to produce resource people in the gender and globalization sectors.

33. A general discussion occurred on the roles of the drafting team representatives and of the expert resource persons, as well as UNEP's desire for regional and gender diversity among the delegates. Mr. Wiser noted that each civil society organization in attendance at the Washington, D.C. conference would have one vote. After nominations were received and the nominees had addressed participants, Tom Hammond (IUCN Canada) and Melanie Nakagawa (NRDC) were elected by secret ballot as the two North American civil society representatives to the Global Civil Society Committee. Betsy Apple (WEDO) and Ross van Horn (Island Resources Foundation) were subsequently elected as resource persons for Gender and Globalization, respectively, with Ross Van Horn also serving as an alternate, if needed, for the Global Civil Society Committee. Additional alternates for resource persons included Rosimeiry Portela (Conservation International) for Globalization, Caron Whitaker (NWF) for Gender, and Daryl Ditz (CIEL) and Susan Keane (NRDC) for Chemicals.

## **VII. Adjournment**

34. The Co-Facilitators reminded the attendees to please fill out the evaluation forms for the Consultation provided by UNEP. The UNEP hosts thanked the group, and Co-Facilitator Glenn Wiser then formally adjourned the meeting.