

8TH GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM 3-4 FEBRUARY 2007

Key Messages: Globalization¹

Theoretically, globalization is a neutral process that can have positive or positive outcomes for sustainable development. In reality, on this planet that is marked by a tremendous gap between a small, rich, powerful elite and a large, disempowered, poor majority, globalization has widened this gap. It has led to a concentration of wealth, power, natural resources, environmental space, information and intellectual property in the hands of a few. This concentration has taken place to the detriment of the majority of the world's population whose ecosystems, water resources and traditional knowledge and other commons have been exploited, polluted, privatized and sold for the benefit of a small, wealthy minority. The economic pillar of sustainable development has undermined the social and environmental pillars of sustainable development in many cases. Women are the majority of the world's poor and are disproportionately affected by these social impacts. The unsustainable consumption patterns by the rich elite mean they occupy a disproportional amount of the earth's environmental space, and bear the main responsibility for the pollution and destruction of the earth's ecosystems.

The Executive Director's discussion paper seems to ignore these equity dimensions of globalization and the social impacts of globalization. Instead, it favors market-based approaches to environmental challenges. Regardless whether these approaches are effective from an environmental perspective, they can have very serious negative impacts on social groups that are economically marginalized and do not have the resources to pay for so-called environmental services. Groups like women, Indigenous Peoples and landless farmers also lack the formal land rights and marketing skills needed to compete in these markets.

We urge the Governing Council to strengthen UNEP's work in the following areas:

- Put equity, fairness, human wellbeing and ecosystems at the heart of UNEP's programs and policies
- Dramatically strengthen its work on changing unsustainable consumption, production and distribution patterns, which form the main driver behind ecosystem destruction in a globalized world
- Halt the privatization and commodification of water resources and ecosystems through so-called markets in ecosystem services, in the light of the negative social impacts of these markets upon women, Indigenous Peoples and the monetary poor in general
- Ensure respect for basic human and labour rights and introduce policies for just employment transition as a central feature of environmental protection and to ensure that workers negatively affected by changes are provided with safe and decent employment alternatives,² for example, the creation of green jobs.
- Protect traditional knowledge, including through ensuring coherence between environmental agreements dealing with genetic resources and traditional knowledge, and international instruments on the rights of Indigenous peoples, especially ILO Convention 169.
- Safeguard the State's regulatory authority over the public commons, including in particular water and biodiversity, taking into account the human right to water and the rights of Indigenous Peoples and local communities regarding their lands, seeds and forests;
- Strengthen its work on developing international legally binding instruments that set social and environmental minimum standards for corporate behavior
- Promote effective participation of environmental Ministers in trade negotiations and urge countries not to ratify trade agreements that might undermine their environmental policies.

¹ This report attempts to represent the outcomes of discussions among the major groups present although this may not be considered explicitly endorsed by all attendees

² See also the Final resolution of the Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment, 15 – 17 January 2006, UNEP/DPDL/TUALE/2

As Indigenous Peoples are one of the groups that is most profoundly affected by globalization, we also draw your attention to the annexed position paper by the Indigenous Peoples' Organizations present at this meeting.

ANNEX

Declaration of Indigenous Peoples to the 24th session of the Global Ministerial Environment Forum

In the different national, regional and international events, Indigenous Peoples have manifested repeatedly that the way in which globalization is happening forms a threat to the existence of Indigenous Peoples, due to the fact that globalization constitutes a principal obstacle to the recognition of the rights of Indigenous Peoples.

The global situation has deteriorated the self-sufficient economies of Indigenous Peoples, causing food insecurity, deepening poverty and the loss of their lands, territories, culture, language and identity.

Globalization is producing actions that prejudice and form obstacles to the very sustainable development and livelihoods of peoples.

The predominance of international free trade agreements over national sovereignty undermines political constituencies, laws and national norms that protect our rights. International corporations and industrialized countries impose their global agenda upon negotiations, affecting on this way the situation of our peoples.

In the process of globalization, the framework of human rights and the rights of Indigenous Peoples should be the basis for trade, investment, development and poverty alleviation policies and programs. The norms of liberalization and the impositions of the World Bank, the IMF and other International Financial Institutions should be changed, which demand from countries that they liberalize their laws, giving better protection to Northern industries than to their peoples.

We reaffirm our commitment with Mother Earth and our responsibility towards future generations, to maintain peace, equity and justice. We continue to insist in the compliance with the commitments that were made at the Earth Summit. The commitments that Indigenous Peoples acquired in Agenda 21, which include the right to full and effective participation in the different decision-making processes regarding environmental themes, which in the majority of cases have not been translated into reality due to a lack of political will.

As Peoples, we reaffirm our right to self-determination and to possess, control and manage our lands and ancestral territories, waters and other resources. Our lands and territories are the basis of our existence. We are earth and the earth is who we are. We have a special relationship, spiritually as well as materially, with our lands and territories, which are eternally united to our survival and the preservation and better development of our systems of knowledge and our cultures, to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity in the management of ecosystems. We encourage the growing acknowledgement of Indigenous Peoples in the United Nations.

And you should not forget that almost everything that has been conserved until now on this planet is thanks to us, thanks to our way of living in balance with nature, as part of her. We reaffirm our message to the World Summit on Sustainable Development that Indigenous Peoples play a vital role in sustainable development.