

**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF NGOS AND OTHER CIVIL SOCIETY
ORGANIZATIONS
GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENTAL FORUM
1-2 FEBRUARY, 2001**

Distinguished Delegates, Friends from NGOs and Civil Society Organizations, Ladies and Gentlemen

Since Malmö, a number of meetings have taken place where commitments and resolutions have been adopted. We would like to make a special reference to the statement adopted by NGOs and Civil Society organisations in Geneva, 7-8 December, 2000. This document will be available and distributed.

I now have the honor to present to you the statement prepared by more than 100 representatives of NGOs and other Civil Society organizations, all with a deep commitment to the goal of sustainable development, met in Nairobi on February 1 and 2, immediately prior to GC 21.

The written text of this statement, together with a summary of actionable recommendations, and brief reports of the discussions that took place during the workshop is being made available.

Before proceeding, I should clarify that by sustainable development we mean development that is both socially and ecologically sustainable, helps eradicate poverty as well as conserve natural resources, ensures human and environmental security, and serves to avoid conflict and insurgency.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Malmö Ministerial Declaration emphasized the importance of strengthening and deepening the relationship between UNEP and Civil Society. We were heartened and challenged to hear these sentiments echoed in the opening statements of the Executive Director of UNEP, Dr. Klaus Töpfer, at the NGO/Civil Society Workshop. This message was reinforced in the statements of all other Senior staff members at the workshop. Involvement of NGOs and Civil Society organizations is critical to proper environmental governance and public policy formulation. They have been primarily responsible for raising the issues of equity and justice and affirmative action in global discussions, and indeed were responsible for the very establishment of this institution. We look to this Governing Council to make effective decisions that will advance our common cause, initiate specific steps in order that this goal is transformed into reality before the next meeting of the Global Ministerial Environment Forum, including those that require new financial resources. We pledge to do our part to achieve this end.

We expect UNEP to now move expeditiously towards integrating the participation of NGOs and Civil Society at all levels of UNEP's planning, decision making, and implementation processes, as is the case in the UN Convention to Combat Desertification, the GEF, and others. We therefore propose to UNEP that an NGO committee be established to help develop interaction between UNEP and the NGO community, and to give support to the NGO Liaison office at UNEP headquarters in Nairobi. We also recommend that the Governing Council

/Global Ministerial Environment Forum incorporate a Multi-Stakeholder dialogue as part of its regular meeting procedures. We are ready to take a lead on the process of integration.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to draw your attention to special needs and concerns of groups and regions.

We recognize that UNEP has involved youth groups in its ongoing activities. It has also given the youth of the world a space to voice their concerns. Yet, a lot more needs to be done, including the strengthening of cooperation between UNEP's thematic as well as regional programs and youth and groups

We stress the need for strengthening UNEP's youth focus through equitable participation of Youth NGOs from different regions, cultures and language groups. In this competitive world of funding, it is also necessary to establish a separate Trust Fund to support youth NGOs through training, information exchange and seed support. UNEP needs to lobby on behalf of the youth to ensure more participation in the organization and Prepcoms of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

UNEP is working at the global and regional level. We would like to mention the special concerns of Africa. UNEP and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements are the only global UN agencies headquartered in Africa, and the next Earth Summit is the first of the series to be held in Africa. We recommend that UNEP recognizes its commitment to this continent, and devote special attention to the needs and special concerns of Africa. In addition, we would also like to mention the special need for support of Eastern Europe and the newly Independent States with regard to environmental governance.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I now turn to the World Summit for Sustainable Development.

The Global Forum at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development played an important role in creating a space for NGO involvement and ensuring a broad range of inputs into the deliberations. NGOs and Civil Society Organizations undertake to ensure the holding of a coherent NGO Forum at the World Summit for Sustainable Development, and request UNEP to support its establishment, and in this regard provide information through electronic and other means, support Civil Society-led national and regional preparatory processes and ensure affirmative action in the involvement of women, youth, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and marginalized groups. The short time frame remaining until Rio+10 lends great urgency to the taking of all the decisions that will give effect to the above considerations.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

With regard to the UN's Global Compact Initiative, the principle of holding enterprises accountable to concerns of human rights and labor and environmental standards is legitimate. However, we are deeply concerned about the process through which the Global Compact has evolved thus far. We would like the future evolution of the Compact to be based on values enshrined in the founding documents of the UN, namely transparency, justice, equity, and broad participation. We are concerned over the absence of a broad range of actors from Civil

Society and even from the private sector from this process. We are concerned over the lack of adequate mechanisms for monitoring, verification, and enforcement of compliance. We are concerned that the broad principles of the compact could get interpreted in a manner that will be detrimental to the lives and livelihoods of poor communities and the economic prospects of small and medium enterprises. This process has raised concerns in some minds about the integrity of the UN. We would like to urge UNEP and the assembled governments to ensure that the development and monitoring of global compact agreements is opened up to the broadest range of actors, especially from the South; that it incorporates the fundamental values that the UN represents; that the implementation of the Compact protects the human economy rather than commercial interests; that proper safeguards are placed upon the future evolution of this initiative; and that the UN and its agencies are funded by governments and not by for-profit organizations.

Distinguished Delegates:

In conclusion let me say that we have traveled together on this road for a long time. We have dreamt the same dreams and shared the same visions. The time has come to begin translating these dreams and visions into reality.

God bless you.

ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Governing Council

1. Make effective decisions and initiate steps to formalize UNEP-Civil Society partnership before the next meeting of the GC/GMEF.
2. Provide adequate resources to UNEP to carry out the resultant responsibilities.
3. Incorporate a multi-stakeholder dialogue as a regular part of GC/GMEF meeting procedures.
4. Devote special attention to the needs and special concerns of Africa.

To UNEP

1. Establish an NGO Committee to develop interaction between UNEP and the NGO community, and support the NGO Liaison Office.
2. Support the establishment of an NGO Forum at World Summit for Sustainable Development by providing information through electronic and other means, supporting NGO and Civil Society-led initiatives, and ensuring affirmative action.
3. Strengthen cooperation with youth and women's groups.
4. Move expeditiously towards integrating the participation of NGOs and Civil Society at all levels of UNEP's functioning.
5. Lobby on behalf of the youth to ensure adequate participation at WSSD.

To Both

1. Ensure that the development and monitoring of Global Compact agreements is opened up to the broadest range of actors, especially from the South; that it incorporates the fundamental values that the UN represents; that the implementation of the Compact protects the human economy rather than commercial interests; that proper safeguards are placed upon the future evolution of this initiative; and that the UN and its agencies are funded by governments and not by for-profit organizations.
2. Establish a special Trust Fund to support youth NGOs through training, information exchange and seed support.
3. Recognize the special needs of Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States.