

August 10, 2007

To; Olivier Deleuze
Chief, Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
P.O. 30552 Nairobi, Kenya
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From Lucien Royer
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Dear Mr. Deleuze,

Major Group Consultation: Enhancing Participation

I am replying to your communication about the above and wish to provide the following comments on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation

First, permit me to congratulate UNEP for this initiative. We agree on the need to strengthen civil society participation within United Nations bodies. This ongoing process is not only necessary for the protection of the environment but also to promote democracy and transparency for UN decision making.

We recognise the progress made for cooperation between trade union organisations and UNEP over the last few years. We appreciate the initiatives taken by the Major Group and Stakeholder Branch, a notable example being the organisation of the first 'Trade Union Assembly on Labour and Environment', where the high level trade union participation served to highlight our commitment to sustainable global environmental governance.

We consider the participation of workers and trade unions in this process as crucial, especially if proper representation of relevant parties is to remain a foundation of UNEP's work.

Trade union organisations share the principles mentioned in the "Rio Spirit" proposal. In our view this means that the content of the Earth Summit Declaration, which pertains to the involvement of nine Major Groups, must be upheld and supported.

We strongly support the constitution of a UNEP Major Group Facilitating Committee composed of representatives of the 9 Major Groups and the 6 UNEP Regions. We believe such a body could very well facilitate Major Groups participation in governance and policy decision-making, program implementation and provision of an institutional framework.

Further, the aims and functions of the Major Group Facilitating Committee should be more detailed in the proposal, e.g. in sections 2.2.1 (Background) and 2.2.2. (Composition).

We specially agree that the Major Group designation should be the basis for composing the committee (2.2.2.). We also agree with the recommendations in paragraph 23 (functioning and procedures of the environmental forum), paragraph 25 (principles of the committee) and paragraph 48 (terms of reference at regional level).

In general, we agree with the content expressed for scenario number 3. However, for the workers and trade union Major Group the notion of "peer organisations" does not exist within our constituency. ITUC is the common trade union body and it would represent the Major Group on the committee and write the policy papers. In general, our regional bodies would internally be consulted, as a matter of course.

Finally, we agree with the terms of reference of the committee outlined in 2.2.3. However we feel that that the additional financial burden to fulfil these objectives could well be prohibitive. We therefore consider that additional financial resources be identified to enable Major Groups to undertake these tasks