

To: Olivier Deleuze
Chief, Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
P.O. Box 30552 – 00100 - Nairobi, Kenya

Following the invitation to accredited organisations to participate in the process for enhancing Major Groups Participation at UNEP Governance level, Sustainlabour would like to submit its views and proposals, on the general process as well as on the concrete guidelines proposed for UNEP last 29 June.

First of all, we would like to congratulate UNEP for this initiative. We completely agree on the need to strengthen civil society participation within United Nations bodies. This ongoing process carried by UNEP is not only necessary for the protection of the environment, but also for United Nations democracy and transparency.

We recognise the significant progress made for cooperation between trade union organisations and UNEP, over these last years. In this sense, we thank the initiatives taken by the Major Group and Stakeholder Branch, an important outcome being the organisation of the First Trade Union Assembly on Labour and Environment. The large attendance of trade unionists was the best evidence of the commitment and implication in global environmental governance.

We consider that the participation of workers and trade unions in this process is absolutely necessary to fulfil the requirement of representativeness and for building a strong commitment of civil society groups in UNEP work.

Trade union organisations fully share the principles mentioned in the proposal: maintenance of the “Rio Spirit”. In our view, this means continuing the Earth Summit Declaration on the need for the involvement of the nine Major Groups in order to achieve sustainable development, but also the premises of democracy, and regional and gender balance.

For all these reasons, 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 this body will facilitate major groups’ participation in governance and policy formulation, program implementation and provision of an institutional framework.

Please find in Annex our specific comments on the guidelines’ recommendations.

Joaquin Nieto Sainz



President - Sustainlabour
International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development

Annex I

Comments on the Guidelines

We believe that the aims and functions of the UNEP Major Group Facilitating Committee (facilitate major groups' participation in governance and policy formulation, program implementation and provision of an institutional framework) should be further detailed in the proposal, for example between the background (2.2.1) and the composition (2.2.2.). Precisely defined objectives from its creation will help the committee to work smoothly, for instance the general objective should be increase civil society participation in decisions adopted by the GC/GEMF in order to improve public policies for sustainability.

On the concrete recommendations presented, we specially agree on:

- the major group base composition of the committee (2.2.2.),
- the recommendation for the functioning and procedures of the environmental forum (2.1.),
- the principles of the committee (2.2.1.) and
- the recommendation on the terms of reference at regional level (2.2.4.).

- On the recommendation for the development of policy statements (2.2.5), in general we agree with the general content of scenario number 3. However, for the workers and trade unions major group this proposal brings some difficulties. Such "peer organisations" does not exist within our constituency. ITUC is the common trade union body and it will represent the major group on the committee and write the policy papers. In general, the regional bodies would internally be consulted, as a matter of course. We would like UNEP to take note of this particularity.

- On the terms of reference of the committee (2.2.3), we consider that perhaps a full time responsible for this work is unnecessary and will charge representative organisations with expensive charges, if UNEP does not provide the means for it. Networks can be key partners for performing tasks but they will not count on heavy structures.

Lastly, we would like to comment some general needs that will have to be taken into consideration. For involving civil society in the different regions UNEP should try to ensure quick translation of relevant documents into UN languages.