

UNEP NORTH AMERICAN CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATION DAY ONE: THURSDAY, 2 NOVEMBER 2006

Approximately 60 participants gathered on 2 November 2006 for the first day of the North American Civil Society Consultation in Washington, DC. The consultation was organized by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) in the lead up to the 2007 UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF). The agenda for the first day of the two-day meeting addressed three of the four issues to be considered at the GC/GMEF: Globalization, Ecosystem Services, and Human Wellbeing; Gender and the Environment; and Water and the Environment.

Following welcoming remarks by Richard Moss, UN Foundation, whose organization was hosting the meeting, and Brennan Van Dyke, UNEP Regional Director for North America, who highlighted changes and activities within UNEP, Consultation Co-facilitator Glenn Wiser, Center for International Environmental Law, reviewed the meeting's agenda.

Kate Davenport, EnviRelation, then reported on the February 2006 Global Civil Society Forum in Dubai, which addressed tourism, energy, chemicals management and governance. She discussed the role that civil society can play in interjecting information about activities and impacts on the ground, based on their experience, into the meeting's dialogue, and highlighted the importance of preparing the region's delegates for lobbying effectively.

On **Globalization, Ecosystem Services, and Human Wellbeing**, Hilary French, UNEP, noted UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner's conviction that the discussion should emphasize opportunities and risks and what governments and UNEP can do. Cecilia Repinski, World Resources Institute, gave a presentation on the "Millennium Ecosystem Assessment" and selected implications for the World Bank, noting that the rural poor are most dependent on ecosystem services and hardest hit when ecosystems are degraded. Co-facilitator Tom Hammond, IUCN-Canada, highlighted the broad scope of the issue and suggested the group identify areas on which the GC/GMEF should focus. Proposals in this regard highlighted ecosystems, deforestation and carbon capacity for forests, and the identification of model projects.

On **Gender and the Environment**, Caron Whitaker, National Wildlife Federation, discussed "Transformational Diplomacy and US Foreign Assistance," highlighting the new US approach to development assistance. She noted that environmental projects have been placed under the objective of economic growth, which will have implications for how progress is judged. Betsy Apple, Women's Environment and Development Organization, discussed "UNEP and Gender." She discussed UNEP's activities related to gender and environment, and identified deficiencies she found in the background report on this issue. She suggested that recommendations should include calls for governments to provide resources for training and capacity building, that they earmark contributions for this issue, and that they be specific about what projects UNEP should undertake and what partnerships it should establish.

On **Water and the Environment**, Karen Krchnak, The Nature Conservancy, provided an overview of the issues related to this issue, highlighting the need for UNEP to identify priorities and to be aware of other processes and fora that are addressing similar issues. She highlighted roles for UNEP in regard to the lack of freshwater data, particularly ground water data, as well as in capacity building, among others. Rick Findlay, of Canada's Pollution Probe, said that the issues which had resonated with him thus far were valuation of ecological services, capacity building, shared waters management and the impacts of climate change on water systems. He noted the merits of creating a training center for shared waters and highlighted that the US and Canada have a lot of experience to share with the world in managing shared waters.

The session ended with a reminder of Day 2's agenda which will include a discussion on Chemicals Management, a Working Group session on all 4 substantive topics and an election of representatives for the drafting meeting and the 8th Global Civil Society Forum.