

UNEP NORTH AMERICAN CIVIL SOCIETY CONSULTATION DAY TWO: FRIDAY, 3 NOVEMBER 2006

Civil society participants from the US and Canada gathered on 3 November 2006 for the second and final 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). During the morning, participants discussed chemicals management and then broke into four working groups to draft statements for the four issues to be considered at the GC/GMEF: Globalization, Ecosystem Services, and Human Wellbeing; Gender and the Environment; Water and the Environment; and Chemicals Management.

On **Chemicals Management**, Brennan Van Dyke, UNEP Regional Director for North American and Susan Keane of the Natural Resources Defense Council and Daryl Ditz of the Center for International Environmental Law briefed participants on the chemicals issues to be considered at the February 2007 GC/GMEF, including cooperation between UNEP and relevant multilateral environmental agreements and other organizations, the strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM), lead and cadmium, and mercury.

Participants then broke into four working groups to draft statements on the issues to be discussed at GC/GMEF, following which they reconvened to present their deliberations to the full group.

Rick Findlay, Pollution Probe and co-chair of the **Water and the Environment Working Group**, presented the statement drafted by that working group. The statement proposed that the member states call on UNEP/RONA to “assume a servant leadership role in supporting the member states’ initiative in capacity building” to achieve, among others: education, training and awareness raising; develop effective institutional and participatory frameworks; measuring and understanding watersheds; and delivering effective and affordable infrastructure, products and services. The working group further proposed that a scalable pilot project, with partners including the US and Canada, be developed in this regard. Discussion on the statement included questions about whether desertification issues had been included and whether marine issues had been discussed in addition to freshwater. Participants also suggested that the statement should address ecosystems services.

Susan Keane, Natural Resources Defense Council and co-chair of the **Chemicals Management Working Group**, presented the deliberations of that group. She said the group highlighted the responsibility of the North American governments to behave ethically and morally on chemicals, and that they set an example given their role as large consumers in this sector. The group encouraged UNEP to collaborate with the International Labor Organizations, World Health Organization and other relevant organizations to promote consistency between occupational and environmental protection from chemicals. They urged governments to support SAICM and to begin negotiations on long-term financing strategies to ensure progress toward achievement of the 2020 goal.

They suggested that the focus for governments and UNEP in relation to SAICM over the next two years should be on capacity building and technology transfer. With regard to metals, the group supported working toward a globally binding instrument on heavy metals, possibly through an existing MEA. Regarding lead and cadmium, they supported identifying specific actions to eliminate them, particularly through the final elimination of lead in gasoline. On coordination and synergies, they encouraged the exploration of all available sources of financial resources for sound chemicals management, among others.

Caron Whitaker, National Wildlife Federation and co-chair of the **Gender and Environment Working Group**, presented that group's deliberations. They proposed endorsing UNEP's Gender Plan of Action as the best way to fulfill decision 23/11, and called on: donor governments to commit adequate resources dedicated to implement UNEP's Gender Plan of Action; UNEP to fully implement the Gender Plan of Action; and UNEP, governments and civil society to develop, strengthen and sustain partnerships in order to implement it. They further highlighted the need for UNEP to revise its benchmarks of success with regard to achieving 23/11 to incorporate gender equity.

Jon Sohn of the World Resources Institute and co-chair of the **Globalization, Ecosystem Services and Human Wellbeing Working Group**, discussed that group's deliberations. Their recommendations addressed: analytical tools and data/information including best practice; information exchange; and engagement with the 9 civil society groups. Specific recommendations included the need to: equip environment ministers with the language to educate other ministries with a view to engaging the World Bank CAS and PRSP processes; develop a clearing house for best practice; explore opportunities to set up schemes and link beneficiaries to producers of ecosystem services; support economic, analytical studies on valuation of ecosystem services; and assess the impact of global commodity trading on ecosystems and ecosystem services.

The working groups will continue working on their drafts through e-mail exchanges to develop a single page of recommendations from which the Consultation co-facilitators Glenn Wiser, Center for International Environmental Law, and Tom Hammond, IUCN-Canada, will develop the report of the North American Civil Society Consultation.

The group then elected two committee members for the Global Civil Society Committee and two additional resource representatives, all of whom will attend the Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF) prior to the GC/GMEF. The committee members will also work with the elected committee members from the other regions to merge the regional statements into a single statement from global civil society.