



8th Global Civil Society Forum Bulletin

A Summary Report of the 8th Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF-8)

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8TH GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM: 3-4 FEBRUARY 2007

The 8th Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF-8) met from 3-4 February 2007, at the UN Office in Nairobi, Kenya. The meeting was organized by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) with support from the African Council for Communication Education. About 160 participants, representing civil society organizations (CSOs) from around 50 countries, attended GCSF-8.

The participants at the meeting addressed: the draft decisions of the 24th Session of the UNEP Governing Council (GC-24)/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF); the programme of work of the GCSF Global Steering Committee; civil society participation in GC-24/GMEF; and the way forward to engage major groups in the work of UNEP. Discussions focused on policy issues related to four themes: water and the environment; gender and the environment; chemicals management; and globalization, ecosystem services and human well-being. A special dialogue session was held on this last theme.

The starting point of the meeting's discussions was the Global Civil Society Statement, prepared by the Global Steering Committee on the basis of the outcomes of the GCSF preparatory meetings held in the six UNEP regions. This Global Civil Society Statement, which addresses the four above-mentioned themes as well as overarching aims, will be presented as civil society's input into GC-24/GMEF.

GCSF-8 constituted a milestone in the history of the GCSF. For the first time, participants engaged in active discussion with UNEP's Executive Director, allowing for a direct and open exchange of information and views. Another highlight was the preparation of concrete input into the GC-24/GMEF ministerial roundtables, to which civil society representatives have been granted access for the first time. At the end of the meeting, the general sense was that GCSF-8 fulfilled its objectives, having enabled and stimulated fruitful input into GC-24/GMEF, while encouraging future cooperation and dialogue.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE GLOBAL CIVIL SOCIETY FORUM

In response to the outcomes of the Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment, the UN General Assembly, in its resolution 2997(XXVII) of 1972, officially established UNEP as the central node for global environmental cooperation and treaty making.

Since its inception, UNEP has enjoyed a special relationship with civil society in tackling environmental issues. Most of the multilateral environmental agreements concluded under the

auspices of UNEP, including the Convention on Biological Diversity and the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, were developed in response to the lobbying efforts of, and in close cooperation with, CSOs. UNEP recognizes civil society engagement at governance and programmatic levels as critical to strengthening the environmental pillar of sustainable development, and fostering action to concretely implement Agenda 21, the comprehensive plan of action adopted by the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 1992.

In 1999, UNEP created a Civil Society and NGOs unit to enhance civil society participation in environmental decision making. A Major Groups and Stakeholder Branch was created in 2004 to enhance participation of civil society in UNEP's work. To achieve this goal of enhancing civil society participation, UNEP developed and adopted a civil society strategy based on: engagement at the policy level; taking into account civil society expertise and views at the intergovernmental level; and engagement at the programmatic level, to involve civil society in the implementation of UNEP's work programme.

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The Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch focuses on: civil society at large; the nine major groups defined in Agenda 21, i.e. farmers, women, the scientific and technological community, children and youth, indigenous peoples and their communities, workers and trade unions, business and industry, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and local authorities; and other relevant stakeholders.

UNEP has organized a yearly GCSF since 2000, in conjunction with the ordinary and special sessions of the UNEP GC/GMEF. GCSF meetings are held just prior to these UNEP meetings, in the same venue. GCSF-8 is taking place as an associated meeting of UNEP GC-24/GMEF, which will be held from 5-9 February 2007, in Nairobi, Kenya.

The GCSF cycle is consolidated through six regional consultation meetings. The programme of work of the GCSF is currently being developed, in collaboration with the newly established Global Steering Committee, with a view to increase impact and interaction with the GC/GMEF. In addition to the GCSF, which functions as the main entry point for civil society participation at the governance level, UNEP hosts special events in collaboration with specific major groups such as the "Global Women's Assembly on Environment" in October 2004 and the "Trade Union Assembly on Labour and the Environment" in January 2006.

GCSF-6: The 6th GCSF was held from 19-20 February 2005 in Nairobi, Kenya, prior to GC-23/GMEF. Among other issues, participants at the meeting addressed: UNEP's programme of work; UNEP National Committees; the Millennium Development Goals; business and youth perspectives on UNEP's priorities; and the aftermath of the Indian Ocean Earthquake Tsunami. The main outcome of the meeting was a Civil Society Statement, combining input from all six regional groups, which addressed: UNEP's programme of work; budget and funding; international environmental governance; and areas for enhanced collaboration between civil society and UNEP. In its conclusion, the Statement reminds governments, especially those in developed countries, not to renege on their promises related to Millennium Development Goal 8 (on developing a global partnership for development), especially as they relate to trade, aid, debt, and commodities.

GCSF-7: The 7th GCSF was held from 5-6 February 2006 in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, prior to the 9th Special Session of the UNEP GC/GMEF. The central subjects for the meeting and its associated preparatory regional meetings were chemicals management, tourism and energy. The main outcome of GCSF-7 was a Civil Society Statement, combining input from all six regional groups, on overarching issues and on



L-R: Olivier Deleuze, UNEP; Beverly Miller, UNEP GC Secretary; Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP; and Cristina Boelcke, UNEP

the meeting's themes. In this document, the GCSF also urges the GMEF and all governments to renew their commitment to Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development by, among others: adopting and abiding by the principle of prior informed consent of affected communities; enhancing participation of indigenous peoples and other under-represented minorities and groups in sustainable development decision making; and ensuring the active participation of all stakeholders in multilateral environmental, health, and sustainable development activities. The Statement also reaffirms that the participation of youth, including through youth employment, is vital to finding solutions to global environmental problems.

GCSF-8 REPORT

OPENING OF THE MEETING

Cristina Boelcke, UN Environment Programme (UNEP), opened the meeting on Saturday morning.

George Odera Outa, African Council for Communication Education (ACCE), welcomed participants to Nairobi, noting that the ACCE is proudly co-hosting GCSF-8 together with UNEP. Stating that environmental issues have become one of the most important challenges of our time, he underlined the importance of communication and education in advancing the environmental agenda.

GCSF-8 Co-Chair Michael Koech, Sustainable Development and Environment Network of Kenya and Chair of the GCSF Global Steering Committee, recalled the work undertaken in 2006 by the six UNEP regions in preparation for GCSF-8. He noted the establishment of the Global Steering Committee, which comprises representatives from all six regions, and the development of the Global Civil Society Statement that will be presented to GC-24/GMEF.

Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP, extended a warm welcome to all participants on behalf of UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner. He underlined the historical relationship between civil society organizations (CSOs) and UNEP, noting that CSOs, despite the reluctance of many governments, spearheaded the efforts for the establishment of an intergovernmental environmental organization during the UN Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972. He identified the GCSF as a major landmark in intensifying the relationship between UNEP and CSOs and GCSF-8 as an important milestone representing the culmination of a wider-ranging, regional preparatory process. He said one of the challenges of



Shafqat Kakakhel, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP

GSCF-8 is to make the Forum truly representative of all major groups, noting the persistent under-representation of business and industry, farmers, and local authorities.

Kakakhel highlighted significant advances in bringing together CSOs and governments, but said an optimal level of interaction has not yet been reached. He encouraged participants to make progress in facilitating dialogue and policy making, and to use the current political momentum to address challenges such as climate change and the depletion of biodiversity resources. Stressing the need to convey to the new UN Secretary-General the message that environmental resources play an essential role in ensuring human survival, development and well-being, he called upon the GCSF to continue to play its important role in this regard.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS

On Saturday morning, participants adopted the meeting's agenda without amendment. GCSF-8 then elected: Melanie Nakagawa, Natural Resources Defense Council, US, as Co-Chair; Mahmood Khwaja, Sustainable Development Policy Institute, Pakistan, as First Vice-Chair; and Sascha Gabizon, Women in Europe for a Common Future, Germany, as Second Vice-Chair.



Co-Chair Melanie Nakagawa, Natural Resources Defense Council, US

REVIEW OF SELECTED GC/GMEF TOPICS AND DRAFT DECISIONS

On Saturday morning, Co-Chair Koech introduced the selected topics to be discussed at the 24th Session of the UNEP Governing Council (GC-24)/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GMEF), namely globalization; gender and the environment; water and the environment; and chemicals management.

Global Steering Committee member Tom Hammond, IUCN, gave an overview of the Global Civil Society Statement (UNEP/GC/24/INF/10), which was compiled and finalized by the Global Steering Committee based on preparatory consultations in the six UNEP regions. Noting that the Statement focuses on the four abovementioned thematic areas, he said it encourages UNEP to promote greater civil society engagement and public participation, as well as cooperation with the private sector, and calls for effective global environmental governance. On globalization, Hammond said the Statement emphasizes the need for greater coherence in international processes such as those related to the World Trade Organization (WTO). Drawing attention to UNEP's significant role with regard to gender issues, he noted the Statement calls for resources to be committed for the implementation of UNEP's Gender Plan of Action.

Kilaparti Ramakrishna, UNEP, presented on globalization, ecosystem services and human well-being. He elaborated on the multi-dimensional nature of globalization, which encompasses cultural, ecological, political and technological aspects, and acknowledged globalization impacts, which have increased in intensity and magnitude. He clarified that UNEP's involvement relates to how human economic activities impact on ecosystem services, water and climate, and emphasized the need to take stock of challenges and opportunities, underscoring the potential role of technology and international environmental governance. Ramakrishna explained that UNEP's Executive Director has identified the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity-building as defining the work programme of the organization.

Tim Kasten, UNEP, discussed how UNEP's draft Water Policy and Strategy (UNEP/GC/24/4/Add.1) sets out to contribute substantively to environmental sustainability in the management of water resources, utilizing integrated ecosystem approaches as a contribution to the internationally agreed targets and goals relevant to water and socioeconomic development. Kasten mentioned that its three key components, namely assessment, management and cooperation, are tied together within a framework of integrated water resources management. Lamenting the "endless cycle of policy development," he said that in the past, recurring themes had not been packaged coherently, adding that the draft Water Policy and Strategy has received widespread support and is perceived to be implementable.

Ramakrishna highlighted issues relating to gender and the environment and the implementation of GC Decision 23/11 on equal participation in decision making and gender mainstreaming. He explained how a UNEP Gender Plan of Action has been developed, including detailed timelines, terms of reference for gender focal points, and the creation of a special advisor position for the Gender Plan of Action at UNEP to give full impact to the Decision. He underscored UNEP's commitment to and ownership of implementing gender and environmental activities.

Matthew Gubb, Secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), discussed chemicals-related issues tabled for consideration by GC-24/GMEF, citing: synergies between chemicals-related multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); SAICM; lead and cadmium management; and mercury management. He noted



Matthew Gubb, SAICM Secretariat

the intensity of activity in terms of policy development, acknowledging the chemical component of the Global Civil Society Statement. He highlighted the establishment of the *ad hoc* joint working group of the three UN conventions on chemicals, namely the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary

Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, noting this working group will soon begin discussions on options for enhanced cooperation. He discussed the need for further work on mercury, including the possibility of negotiating a legally binding instrument.

Co-Chair Koech invited general comments from the floor. One participant remarked that most of the recommendations in the Global Civil Society Statement are directed at UNEP, while few target governments. On recommendations on chemicals management, he suggested referencing not only DDT, but harmful chemicals in general, and said more studies are needed on the link between chemicals and human health.

A few participants addressed the promotion of payment for environmental services. Some noted that this concept implies a commodification and privatization of resources that are common heritage and suggested that the Global Civil Society Statement address this. One participant remarked that UNEP cannot dictate to sovereign States whether or not to privatize their resources.

Several participants said environmental problems need to be given more priority on the international policy agenda, urging UN agencies to put more pressure on governments, and governments to exert their authority over corporations and impose stronger, legally binding regulations. One participant drew attention to the environmental impact of war, while another suggested UNEP focus more on grassroots-level education.

PRESENTATION OF THE WORK PROGRAMME OF THE GLOBAL STEERING COMMITTEE

On Saturday morning, Global Steering Committee member Gordon Bispham, Caribbean Policy Development Centre, Barbados, briefly presented the work programme of the Committee. He said it identifies four critical areas of future action: broadening and deepening partnerships; facilitating intra- and interregional CSO networking; enhancing information flows and a more comprehensive communication strategy; and promoting further cooperation for the next GCSF.

During ensuing discussion, one participant suggested examining the operational procedures and activities of other partnerships, such as the World Olympians Association, an umbrella organization of former Olympic athletes who



L-R: Co-Chair Melanie Nakagawa, Natural Resources Defense Council, US; GCSF-8 Co-Chair Michael Koech, Sustainable Development and Environment Network of Kenya and Chair of the GCSF Global Steering Committee; Esther Neuhaus, Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for Sustainable Development (FBMOS); and Global Steering Committee member Gordon Bispham, Caribbean Policy Development Centre, Barbados

join forces to, *inter alia*, advance environmental protection. Participants debated how to ensure equal participation of all major groups, and of CSOs that do not fall within any particular major group. Some wondered whether, given the wide variety of views and opinions among major groups, the Global Civil Society Statement should aspire to be a consensus document. Others stressed the need to define “partnership.”

Bispham clarified that the partnerships the Global Steering Committee aims to facilitate are between States and non-States as well as between major groups. Noting the development of an interactive Committee website, he recognized the critical role of information and raw data for decision making. He acknowledged that the concept of nine major groups has proven to be insufficient in many regions and that other organized groups should also be involved in dialogue and decision making, adding that a reclassification of major groups might be needed. Noting that a consensus statement should be possible based on areas of common interest, he recognized the value of minority views, but stressed the need for “critical mass” when interacting with GC-24/GMEF.

Global Steering Committee member Esther Neuhaus, Brazilian Forum of NGOs and Social Movements for Sustainable Development (FBMOS), elaborated on the establishment of the Committee and its activities. She said the Committee aims to: increase the impact of the GCSF at GC/GMEF meetings through enhanced capacity among CSOs; increase ownership and engagement of civil society at the governance level; and foster interregional dialogue.

On the value added by the Committee, Neuhaus said it ensures that civil society experts and issue-specific groups have a forum to express their views, while it constitutes a nucleus around which the different issues arising from regional CSO meetings can be compiled.

On future work, she highlighted the preparation of a background paper on improving the global civil society structure, noting the paper addresses the history of civil society participation and draws attention to examples of successful international forums, adding that a draft will be ready by September 2007.

Among potential focal areas of the Committee’s programme of work, Neuhaus highlighted deepening partnerships amongst CSOs and State actors in the intergovernmental process and contributing to the agenda of the next GCSF.

During the ensuing discussion, several participants suggested using as an example the experiences of other UN bodies and processes that have steering committees. They discussed how to improve major groups’ engagement with groups that do not attend meetings, and with each other between meetings.

One participant suggested referring to the Committee as a facilitating committee rather than a steering committee. Another urged the availability of GCSF meeting documents in UN languages besides English, French and Spanish. Some lamented the lack of communication and follow-up after meetings.

One participant questioned the process by which UNEP accredits NGOs to attend its meetings, calling for development of transparent selection criteria and sensitization of NGOs that are unaware of dates and details of meetings. Another encouraged UNEP to identify partners that can support

environmental conservation and gear those toward relevant actors on the ground, rather than toward governments. Participants also suggested establishing regional and national civil society committees.

Participants urged the connection of international policy making to the local level and more effective organization in terms of outreach.

ENGAGING AT GC-24/GMEF

On Saturday afternoon, Second Vice-Chair Gabizon moderated the session on engaging at GC-24/GMEF.

Olivier Deleuze, UNEP, outlined the format for GC-24/GMEF, highlighting the ministerial consultation themes relating to UN reform and globalization and the environment. He also discussed the GC/GMEF rules of procedure, and entry points for civil society participation, affirming UNEP's efforts to



Second Vice-Chair Sascha Gabizon, Women in Europe for a Common Future, Germany

create space for civil society participation and facilitate effective interactive dialogue. He explained that nine seats would be available for civil society representatives to actively engage in discussion, and nine seats for alternates, both in the Committee of the Whole (COW), if convened, and in the ministerial plenary discussion. On the six parallel ministerial roundtables, he clarified that civil society participation would be limited to two seats per roundtable.

Participants raised various questions relating to modalities for selecting civil society groups to participate in the roundtable discussions. One participant called for a more flexible system of participation within the COW, while another questioned whether the ministerial roundtable discussions would feed into the COW process.

FINALIZING THE MESSAGES AND THE STRATEGY FOR GC-24/GMEF

On Saturday afternoon, Global Steering Committee member Muhammad Al-Sayrafi, Friends of the Environment, Qatar, introduced the discussion on messages and the strategy for GC-24/GMEF. Drawing attention to the fact that GCSF-8's four themes have been incorporated into the Global Civil Society Statement, he invited suggestions regarding additional topics to be brought to the attention of the GC-24/GMEF. Participants agreed on war and environment, including the issues of human migration and military activity at peace time, as an additional topic. Participants discussed these five themes in informal break-out groups.

On Sunday afternoon, in a session chaired by Co-Chair Nakagawa, four of the five informal break-out groups presented their findings in plenary. Nakagawa noted that these

findings will possibly be circulated as information documents during GC-24/GMEF, and that they should be regarded as supplements to the Global Civil Society Statement.

Gordon Bispham, Global Steering Committee, reported on the discussions on globalization, noting participants had drawn attention to weaknesses in the Global Civil Society Statement concerning rights and interaction between the environmental agenda and labor organizations.

Reporting on the discussions on chemicals, Second Vice-Chair Gabizon noted a call for: stronger support for SAICM; a legally binding instrument on mercury; action to address contradictory action by UN agencies; and cooperation with the Basel Convention on issues such as disposal of electronic waste, used tires and asbestos.

Betsy Apple, Women's Environment and Development Organization (WEDO), reported on the discussions on gender, noting the call for UNEP to implement its existing gender commitments.

Bispham reported on the discussions on war and environment, stressing the need for awareness raising on the negative impact of war on sustainable development and noting that war should be considered as a cross-cutting issue. Drawing attention to the relationship between war and issues such as water quality, cancer and birth defects, he highlighted the issues of forced migration and environmental refugees, and noted the financial benefits of reducing military activity.

There was substantial debate concerning the status of the supplementary statements, following on from discussions on whether or not the Global Civil Society Statement should aim to be a consensus document. Participants agreed not to consider these supplements as consensus documents, and decided that, when circulated as information documents at GC-24/GMEF, each supplement will list the organizations supporting it.

DIALOGUE WITH THE UNEP EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

On Saturday afternoon, Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, joined the meeting to deliver an address and engage in interactive dialogue with the GCSF.

Steiner underscored the relevance of GC-24/GMEF convening against the backdrop of the unprecedented international interest in the recently released Intergovernmental



Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director

Panel on Climate Change report relating to the science of climate change. He described climate change as the "principal challenge of our time," cutting through economic, foreign, development and industrial policy. He said that CSOs have an important opportunity to assist UNEP in articulating a response to climate change, degradation of natural resources, unsustainable use and the collapse of ecosystems,

stressing that the focus should be on persuading the international community to move the environmental sustainability agenda forward.

Describing the GMEF as the “most important global platform for addressing environmental issues,” he urged GC-24/GMEF to be more than just a meeting of governments and the international environmental community. Regarding civil society’s engagement within the multilateral environmental process, he acknowledged tensions between governments and civil society and called for interactions between CSOs and UNEP to be clearly articulated. He underscored that CSOs should be seen as more than just observers, but rather as assets and resources. Addressing globalization within the context of an economic rationale for environmental action, Steiner highlighted the environment-trade dimension, acknowledging the participation of the WTO at GC-24/GMEF. He concluded by inviting the business community to use UNEP as a platform for sending a signal to the world on how it wants to be perceived as part of the solution and not always part of the problem.

In the ensuing discussion, one participant expressed concern with the lack of concrete achievements in the fields of environmental protection, drinking water improvement and poverty reduction. She inquired about UNEP’s strategy in relation to gender equality. Steiner highlighted UNEP’s Gender Plan of Action and a strategic implementation team, noting ongoing developments.

A participant suggested holding multi-stakeholder dialogues prior to GC sessions, in line with other intergovernmental organizations. Steiner welcomed the idea, noting however that there is “room for innovation, but not for revolution.”

Another participant mentioned that MEAs and WTO regulations and processes, including the WTO Doha Development Round, are often in conflict. Steiner acknowledged the “no-man’s land phenomenon” relating to trade and environment issues that are addressed under multiple processes, citing the example of discussions in the context of the Convention of Biological Diversity. He said discussions would be held between governments and the WTO on this issue during GC-24/GMEF.

A participant lamented the limited participation of civil society in the GMEF. Steiner noted ongoing reform regarding stakeholder participation, but added that he did not aspire to transform the GMEF into a multi-stakeholder forum, so as to allow room for true ministerial consultations.

One participant invited UNEP to take a more active interest in existing programmes on internationally shared watersheds. In response, Steiner encouraged all parties to support and endorse UNEP’s draft Water Policy and Strategy.

Participants expressed the need to ensure the full and effective participation of civil society in UNEP’s work and called for mechanisms to evaluate progress. They debated how to convince governments to take their environmental responsibilities seriously. In return, Steiner reflected on which environmental governance system is needed by countries in a world driven by financial flows, noting that UNEP as an intergovernmental organization depends on empowerment by governments. He posed the question of whether UNEP should develop a system of national environmental performance evaluation to produce a report similar to the UN Development

Programme (UNDP) Human Development Reports, to capture how countries are moving forward in implementing their environmental commitments.

One participant lamented persistent worldwide problems regarding water management, land degradation and food insecurity, and opined that UNEP should be represented at country and subregional levels. Steiner responded that rather than investing in many national UNEP offices, he favored effectuating a greater strategic presence by reinforcing UNEP’s regional offices and pursuing a more integral approach with other UN agencies.

A participant suggested enhancing the facilitation of civil society participation through increased allocation of daily subsistence allowance (DSA). Steiner underscored financial limitations due to the large number of interested CSOs, adding that increasing DSA allocation to support an extra, but still limited, number of CSOs would result in the loss of freedom of expression and access.

A participant enquired about UNEP’s efforts to address issues pertaining to indigenous peoples’ rights in relation to payment for ecosystem services. Steiner acknowledged the complexity of this issue, for instance with respect to land tenure and traditional rights of access.

He announced that a specialist would be appointed to address MEA follow-up and payment for ecosystem services issues. Recognizing that one staff appointment alone will not solve the problem, he assured participants of UNEP’s continuous efforts and strong commitment to issues in relation to equity and legal standing. Steiner also noted that while climate change might be the most topical environmental agenda item of this time, ecosystem degradation and lack of ecosystem restoration are problems of equal value and priority.

WAY FORWARD TO ENGAGE MAJOR GROUPS IN THE WORK OF UNEP

On Sunday morning, in a session chaired by Co-Chair Koech, participants addressed the way forward to engage major groups in the work of UNEP.

Olivier Deleuze, UNEP, reflected on major issues emanating for the previous day’s discussions. He underscored the importance of the regional consultations as a bottom-up process and a means for facilitating closer engagement with UNEP. Drawing attention to the issue of representativeness at these consultations, he said participation needs to be broad-based. He also discussed how the regional meetings could function as a mechanism for civil society to track national implementation of decisions taken at the international level.

Tom Hammond, Global Steering Committee, presented modalities for engaging major groups in the work of UNEP.



Tom Hammond, Global Steering Committee

Observing that civil society engagement at the governance level does not always work well in practice, he underlined the need to improve information flows with UNEP. Regarding effective strategies for enhancing engagement, he highlighted the Global Civil Society Statement, dialoguing with the UNEP Executive Director and the opportunity to intervene during the GMEF roundtables and plenary.

Esther Neuhaus, Global Steering Committee, underscored the importance of implementing the Bali Strategic Plan on Technology Support and Capacity-building, calling for UNEP regional offices to be strengthened to improve outreach. On improving the policy-making process, she suggested CSOs involvement in drafting documents that address engagement with UNEP, in addition to providing comments on key UNEP draft documents. She also encouraged CSOs to forge closer linkages with the UNEP Committee of Permanent Representatives, since this is the body responsible for drafting GC/GMEF documents. Identifying the SAICM rules of procedures as an example of best practice for engaging civil society, she emphasized the need to draw lessons from other processes, such as the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and conferences of the parties to UN conventions.

Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI), noted that ICLEI will soon be renamed Local Governments for Sustainability. He said while systems of local governance vary widely, ICLEI constitutes a global environmental community that fosters relationships with allies, including UNEP. Underscoring that local action and developments can respond faster than national governments



Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)

and global mechanisms, he said local governments can be an important strategic ally for UNEP by putting into place effective local regulations. Stressing the potential for a “charming mutual relationship,” he suggested developing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between UNEP and ICLEI to define mutual expectations and contributions and to set out future common work.

Jürg Gerber, World Business Council for Sustainable Development, underlined that environmental sustainability often makes good business sense, and that business is a key stakeholder in environmental discussions. He encouraged UNEP to increase efforts to involve all major groups in its work, and urged that all major groups be represented in the GCSF Global Steering Committee. Gerber called for global standards to enhance environmental governance, and noted that the business community already has mechanisms in place to interact at the global level, highlighting the UN Global Compact, a global voluntary corporate responsibility initiative.



L-R: Lucien Royer, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), and Esther Neuhaus, Global Steering Committee

Lucien Royer, International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), described the work of ITUC’s Working Party on Occupational Health, Safety and Environment (OHSE), noting its watchdog role with regard to environment and the workplace. Discussing ongoing engagement with UNEP, he identified challenges, including: insufficient training of experts; resistance of employers in promoting real worker participation; reluctance of governments to make the workplace a field of environmental action; and deficiencies at the local level to connect with civil society partners on environmental issues. Highlighting that OHSE is engaging in a two-year programme of work with UNEP, he called for: effective focal points within UNEP’s Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch; enhanced dialogue with other civil society actors; and improved engagement with local authorities.

Jacob Mati, CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation, said CIVICUS aims to promote citizen participation in governance and development processes, stressing that environmental issues are also human rights issues and livelihood issues. Noting the links between environment and poverty eradication, and between globalization and social justice, he underlined the need for citizens to engage with UNEP at the programmatic, policy formulation, implementation and monitoring levels. Mati highlighted the flagship programme of CIVICUS, Civil Society Watch, which aims to enable citizen organizations to engage with and give a voice to “the voiceless.”

Drawing attention to the increasing rate of environmental degradation, Johan Rockström, Stockholm Environment Institute, said the current global sustainability efforts are insufficient, describing them as merely “rearranging the chairs on the Titanic.” He observed that the scientific community and civil society are outpacing the political establishment in terms of response. Discussing UNEP in the context of its guiding role in charting the course towards sustainability, Rockström elaborated on opportunities for establishing new types of partnerships. On progressing from science to development, he highlighted his organization’s collaboration with the International Red Cross. He called on the GC/GMEF to provide a new lens for policy and international environmental governance, reiterating that the scientific community has raised the “red flag” during this critical phase of environmental degradation and urged the international community not to procrastinate on the periphery of inaction.



Panel members during the session on the Way Forward to Engage Major Groups in the Work of UNEP

In the ensuing discussion, participants addressed various issues, including the need for civil society to engage more with governments and for enhanced outreach to grassroots constituencies. They also debated the composition of the Global Steering Committee, calling for it to be more viable and representational. One participant suggested emulating the CSD process, which he described as transparent and participatory. Several participants reiterated that statements developed by individual major groups are more useful than a consensus Global Civil Society Statement.

Responding to the discussion, panel members acknowledged shortcomings relating to the composition of Global Steering Committee, especially in terms of gender balance. They affirmed the need for civil society to engage with governments at the national level with a view to monitoring local implementation of international commitments, in addition to forging closer links with local governments. One panellist suggested engaging on topics receiving more international attention such as climate change and setting up partnerships to address adaptation issues.

A participant expressed concern over IUCN, an intergovernmental organization, being represented on the Global Steering Committee. Hammond acknowledged this apparent contradiction, but said IUCN is represented in the Committee because of its experience in managing networks and engaging with civil society. Another participant lamented the “glacial pace of change” in the GCSF context and, supported by Hammond, called for clear timelines, targets and indicators to assess progress made, and for increased collaboration between environmental organizations.

It was also noted that large-scale communication may be needed to sensitize small businesses, and that indigenous peoples’ participation should be increased, not only in the GCSF. Gordon Bisham, Global Steering Committee, stressed the value of: MoUs for partnerships; looking ahead rather than focusing on challenges; and a statement underlining civil society consensus on basic issues.

DIALOGUE SESSION ON GLOBALIZATION, ECOSYSTEM SERVICES AND HUMAN WELL-BEING

On Sunday afternoon, in a session moderated by Ross van Horn, Island Resources Foundation, participants engaged in a dialogue session with business and industry, local authorities, indigenous peoples and their communities, and government representatives, addressing globalization, ecosystem services and human well-being.

Walter Lindner, German Ambassador to Kenya, noted that Germany has assumed presidency of the European Union (EU) and the Group of Eight (G-8), emphasizing that 2007 would be crucial in terms of galvanizing momentum and bringing the environmental agenda forward, particularly in relation to

climate change. He expressed concern regarding people who deny or play down the effects of climate change, stating that they are “playing Russian roulette with a fully loaded gun.”

Doaa Abdel-Motaal, WTO, highlighted the importance of trade as an engine for globalization, acknowledging impacts on the environment. Underscoring the necessity of partnerships between the WTO, MEAs and UNEP, she cautioned against using environmental measures as disguised trade restrictions, noting the potential of trade to lead to more efficient allocation of resources if externalities are taken into account. She explained that the environmental component of the Doha Development Round aims to remove harmful subsidies and to reduce barriers to the entry of clean technologies.

Esther Camac, Ixacavaa Association for Indigenous Development and Information, Costa Rica, outlined four guiding principles to life: respect for life and human beings on Mother Earth; thanksgiving for life that has been inherited; taking care of Mother Earth; and the obligation to return to her everything that she has given to us. Citing the UNDP Human Development Index, she observed that it does not always take into account indigenous peoples’ perspectives, because the focus is on a developmental rather than a holistic approach.

Konrad Otto-Zimmermann, ICLEI, explained the link between local authorities and globalization, observing that cities and towns are affected by globalization, as local assets, language and culture are under threat. He described how cities are joining together to address global environmental problems such as sea-level rise due to climate change, noting that many metropolises are located in coastal areas. He said environmental change and degradation will be felt most severely by city residents, which correspondingly puts pressure on local authorities, and called for the promotion of self-governance at the local level.

Jürg Gerber, World Business Council, highlighted the growing awareness of the interconnectivity between business, environment, people and culture, signalling the strong business case to undertake activities that preserve and restore ecosystem services. On facilitating a sustainable business approach, he mentioned the need to improve implementation and capacity building.

In the ensuing discussion, participants called on the WTO to implement trade measures that are supportive of national as opposed to multinational interests. One participant suggested that the WTO rules should be subordinate to MEAs, while another raised the potential of trade rules undermining



Participants during the dialogue session on Globalization, Ecosystem Services and Human Well-Being



Doaa Abdel-Motaal, WTO

labor protection and rights and conflicts with International Labour Organization agreements.

In response, Abdel-Motaal acknowledged that while the WTO is not a perfect institution, it does operate via consensus and is essentially designed to help countries develop. Explaining how the Doha Development

Round is aimed at addressing historical injustices, by also, for the first time, considering environmental issues, she called on the environmental community to help finalize the current round of negotiations.

She added that the presence of the WTO Director-General during GC-24/GMEF signals WTO commitment to addressing trade-environmental issues.

Regarding tensions between the WTO and MEAs, governments were urged to be consistent and avoid taking divergent positions within the WTO and MEA processes, as well as facilitate collaboration with international organizations. On ensuring transparency, Abdel-Motaal said that it is up to governments to open up the dispute-settlement process to public scrutiny. Regarding labor standards, she clarified that the WTO does not stand in the way of countries taking steps to protect their workforces and only took issues when labor standards are exported and used as disguised trade restrictions. She added that many WTO member States do not wish to see labor issues discussed under the WTO, because they are reluctant to erode their cheap-labor comparative advantage.

Responding to a call for the EU to take the lead in addressing environmental issues, and specifically to look at the exports of persistent organic pollutants in particular and hazardous wastes in general, Lindner reiterated Germany's commitment to environmental issues, including chemicals management, and the EU's commitment to establishing homogeneous environmental standards.

Highlighting the social impacts of globalization, a participant drew attention to "the tremendous gap between the small rich minority and the large poor majority." She expressed concern regarding UNEP embracing market-based policies that ignore social considerations and exclude those unable to pay for ecosystems services, adding that over-consumption lies at the heart of the matter. The link between ecosystem services, multinational profitability and environmental degradation was emphasized, with one participant reflecting on the type of legally enforceable environmental standards that multinational companies are willing to be subject to.

Gerber clarified that sustainable development is the umbrella concept for the companies that his organization represents, but environmental issues need to be translated into a language that business will understand.

Regarding examples of good practices concerning urbanization and slums, Otto-Zimmerman lamented that most countries have failed to develop a successful economic and

spatial model, emphasizing the need to facilitate a vibrant slum economy and that the creation of internal governance structures in these informal settlements maintains law and order.

OTHER MATTERS

On Sunday afternoon, Najib Saab, Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED), said AFED: was recently established and will be formally announced at GC-24/GMEF; unites environmental experts, civil society, the business community and the media while admitting government agencies as observers; and promotes prudent environmental policies and programmes in the Arab region. He said its main product would be an annual state of the environment report describing Arab countries' efforts to contribute to global environmental management. Among elements of AFED's programme, he cited the promotion of: corporate environmental responsibility; environmental awareness, communication, education, legislation and governance; water resources management; combating desertification; and waste management.

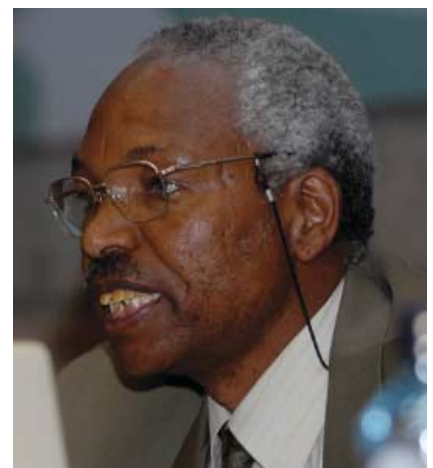
CLOSING SESSION

Co-Chair Koech chaired the closing session on Sunday afternoon.

Sylvia Macchini, ACCE, reaffirmed the importance of partnerships between governments and CSOs, noting that civil society input is an indispensable basis for government policies. She said GCSF-8 has succeeded in enhancing CSOs' capacity in engaging with UNEP and expressed hope that the outcomes will be disseminated to a wider public.

Olivier Deleuze, UNEP, thanked participants for their extensive preparatory work and their discussions during GCSF-8. He stressed the importance of convincing the world that there is an urgent need for new environmental values, new ways of consuming and producing, and new ways of thinking, and for accelerating the pace of action. Commending participants for their constructive and professional work at GCSF-8, he looked forward to a productive GC/GMEF session, and ensured participants of UNEP's willingness to continue to improve its cooperation with civil society.

Co-Chair Koech underlined the important role of civil society in shaping the global sustainability agenda. He recalled that civil society was instrumental in UNEP's inception 35 years ago, noting that civil society continues to be closely connected to UNEP's work. He thanked participants for their support to the Global Steering Committee, stating it will take on the challenge of ensuring appropriate representation in both the Committee and the GCSF. Stressing the importance of ensuring that the meeting's outcomes are taken on



GCSF-8 Co-Chair Michael Koech, Sustainable Development and Environment Network of Kenya and Chair of the GCSF Global Steering Committee

board by governments and UNEP, he expressed hope that civil society engagement and communication with governments and UNEP will continue to improve.

Co-Chair Koech closed the meeting at 6:28 pm.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

24TH SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM:

UNEP GC-24/GMEF is scheduled to take place from 5-9 February 2007 in Nairobi, Kenya. For more information, contact: Beverly Miller, UNEP GC Secretary; tel: +254-20-7621-234; fax: +254-20-7624-489; e-mail: beverly.miller@unep.org; internet: <http://www.unep.org>

51ST SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF WOMEN (CSW): This CSW meeting will take place from 26 February - 9 March 2007 at UN Headquarters in New York, US. The CSW recommends and reports to the UN Economic and Social Council on the promotion of women's rights in the political, economic, civil, social and educational fields and also addresses problems affecting women that require immediate attention. The theme for the 51st CSW session will be "The elimination of all forms of discrimination and violence against the girl child." For more information, contact: UN Division for the Advancement of Women; tel: 1-212-963-8034; fax: 1-212-963-3463; e-mail: daw@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw>

INTERNATIONAL FORUM ON WATER

ENVIRONMENTAL GOVERNANCE IN ASIA: This forum will take place on 14-15 March 2007 in Bangkok, Thailand. It is organized as part of the Water Environment Partnership in Asia (WEPA), an initiative launched by the Japanese Ministry of the Environment at the 3rd World Water Forum in 2003. The forum aims to promote water environment governance by supporting dialogue among various stakeholders in Asian monsoon regions, developing human resources and strengthening ties for the future amongst people responsible for improving water environment governance in the region. For more information, contact: WEPA Secretariat, c/o Freshwater Resources Management Project; tel: +81-46-855-3743; fax: +81-46-855-3809; e-mail: contact@wepa-db.net; internet: http://www.iges.or.jp/en/fw/0703wepa_sympto.html

ANNUAL MEETING FOR THE ALLIANCE FOR GLOBAL SUSTAINABILITY: This AGS Annual Meeting, under the theme "Pathways to our common future," will be held from 18-21 March 2007 in Barcelona, Spain. Hosted by the Technical University of Catalonia (UPC), the meeting is open for industry representatives, politicians, researchers, students, NGO representatives and interested public. For more information, contact: Christina Lundéhn, AGS Focus Center Coordinator; tel: +46-31-772-4959; fax: +46-31-772-4958; e-mail: secretariat@agsevent.org; internet: <http://www.agsevent.org>

FIFTEENTH SESSION OF THE UN COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (CSD-15): CSD-15 will be held from 30 April - 11 May 2007, in New York, US. It will build on the "review year" discussions at CSD-14, focusing on "policy" options for energy for sustainable development, industrial development, air pollution/atmosphere, and climate change. For more information, contact: Division

for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs; tel: +1-212-963-8102; fax: +1-212-963-4260; e-mail: dsd@un.org; internet: <http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/csd/policy.htm>

ECO SUMMIT 2007: The Summit on Ecological Complexity and Sustainability: Challenges and Opportunities for 21st Century's Ecology (Eco Summit 2007) will take place from 22-27 May 2007 in Beijing, China. The aim of this Summit is to encourage a greater integration of both the natural and social sciences with the policy and decision-making community to develop a better understanding of the complex nature of ecological systems. For more information, contact: Yan Zhuang, Research Center for Eco-Environmental Sciences; tel: +86 (0) 10-62849113 or 62849101; fax: +86 (0) 10-62849101; e-mail: ecosummit2007@rcees.ac.cn or yanzhuang66@163.com; internet: <http://www.ecosummit2007.elsevier.com>

7TH CIVICUS WORLD ASSEMBLY: This meeting of CIVICUS, the World Alliance for Citizen Participation, will be held from 23-27 May in Glasgow, Scotland. For more information, contact: Eva Rehse, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations; tel: +44 (0)131-474-6194; fax: +44 (0)131-556-0279; e-mail: civicassembly@scvo.org.uk or worldassembly@civicus.org; internet: <http://www.civicassembly.org>

2ND SHARING INDIGENOUS WISDOM

CONFERENCE: The second Conference on Sharing Indigenous Wisdom: An International Dialogue on Sustainable Development will take place from 11-15 June in Green Bay, Wisconsin, US. The conference, hosted by the College of Menominee Nation's Sustainable Development Institute (SDI), is held to foster dialogue on traditional indigenous knowledge being utilized and incorporated as models and methods of sustainable practices. For more information, contact: Dale Kakkak, SDI; tel: +1-715-799-6226; fax: +1-715-799-5951; e-mail: dkakkak@menominee.edu; internet: <http://www.sharingindigenouswisdom.org>

GLOBAL COMPACT LEADERS SUMMIT: The Leaders Summit will be held from 5-7 July 2007 at UN Headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. It is a triennial gathering of the top executives of all Global Compact participants and other stakeholders to discuss the Global Compact and corporate citizenship at the highest level, and to produce strategic recommendations and action imperatives related to the future evolution of the initiative. For more information, contact: Birgit Errath, Leaders Summit Coordinator; tel: +1-917-367-3421; fax: +1-212-963-1207; e-mail: errath@un.org or info@globalcompactsummit.org; internet: <http://www.globalcompactsummit.org>



Group photo of some of the Forum's participants