

**United Nations Environment Programme
North American Regional Civil Society Consultation
In Preparation for the 9th Special Session of the UNEP
Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum**

Facilitator's Summary¹

Background

1. This is the Facilitator's Summary of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) North American Regional Civil Society Consultation, which was held on 28 October 2005. The regional civil society consultations are intended to provide input into the upcoming 9th Special Session of the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum (GC/GMEF) to be held in February 2006, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The North American Civil Society Consultation was convened by the UNEP Regional Office of North America (RONA) and hosted by the United Nations Foundation (UNF).
2. The GC/GMEF is an annual meeting of the world's environment ministers. The 2006 GC/GMEF will focus on three main policy issues: energy and the environment, chemicals management, and tourism and the environment. Immediately preceding the GC/GMEF will be a Global Civil Society Forum (GCSF), which will present an opportunity to integrate the perspective and experience of civil society into the ensuing discussions at the GC/GMEF.
3. The purpose of the 28 October Consultation was to brief North American civil society organizations on the three main policy issues and to enable a discussion among civil society that would result in a set of recommendations to include in a North American Regional Civil Society Statement. This Consultation was one of a series of regional civil society consultations that UNEP convened in preparation for the GC/GMEF and the GCSF.
4. The 28 October Consultation included introductory remarks, a panel and discussion about civil society organizations and UNEP, and brief statements regarding the three main policy issues followed by discussion among the participants. The Consultation then broke into working groups that focused on each main policy issue and made reports that were discussed in the context of preparing the North American Regional Civil Society Statement. A copy of the agenda is attached to this Facilitator's Summary as Annex 1.

Introductory Remarks

5. Mr. Duncan Marsh of the UN Foundation opened the meeting by welcoming participants on behalf of the UN Foundation to the third Regional Civil Society Consultation.
6. Ms. Brennan Van Dyke, UNEP Regional Director for North America, also welcomed the participants on behalf of UNEP. She reminded the participants that the purpose of the Regional Civil Society Consultation is to talk about the upcoming GC/GMEF and to prepare for the

¹ The Facilitator was Glenn Wiser, Senior Attorney, Center for International Environmental Law.

GCSF. Ms. Van Dyke also described the three main policy issues and the procedure for compiling the North American Regional Statement. Finally, she noted that the UNEP Governing Council has a specific accreditation process for organizations that wish to take part in the GCSF.

7. Mr. Glenn Wiser, Senior Attorney at the Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) and Facilitator of the Consultation, also offered introductory remarks. He stated that the ultimate objective of the meeting was to prepare a North American Civil Society Statement that may serve as input to the Global Civil Society Statement, which will be presented to ministers at the GC/GMEF. He also reviewed the agenda and invited participants to introduce themselves to the group.

Panel: Why Should Civil Society Organizations Engage with UNEP?

8. Mr. Wiser then introduced the three panelists for the first panel topic: discussing the value of civil society engaging with UNEP and how to do it.

9. Mr. Terry Fenge, Strategic Counsel to the Inuit Circumpolar Conference, Canada, described the impacts of global environmental degradation resulting from global warming in the Arctic region. Mr. Fenge described the effects of global warming and its impact on the hunting culture of the Inuit, pointing out that the Inuit are part of both the developing and developed worlds. He stressed that the Arctic is on the cusp of very significant development and investment in different resources. Finally, he explained how the indigenous people are well organized politically and are internationally oriented, and he urged participants to remember the Arctic dimension when engaging in advocacy.

10. Mr. Graham Saul, International Program Director with Friends of the Earth Canada (FOEC) described how FOEC developed a project that focused on encouraging engagement with eight multilateral institutions. This project included publishing separate handbooks for each institution that answer basic questions and give information about how civil society can engage with those institutions. Mr. Saul also described UNEP's role as a public policy forum and information exchange network, and in facilitating input and access to official decision-making processes.

11. Mr. Daniel Magraw, President of the Center for International Environmental Law, United States, described his experience as coordinator of the North American delegation to the previous GCSF in Nairobi, Kenya. He commented on how the energy and focus of civil society can help UNEP as well as governments to deal with important issues. Next, Mr. Magraw presented lessons he learned from last year's GCSF, noting that other constituencies made their own presentations on key issues at the various meetings. He observed that the Regional Statement that this Consultation was to compile would be an important document. Finally, Mr. Magraw stated five principles of effectiveness in this process, including: be prepared in terms of facts and substance, stay within UNEP's mandate and take advantage of UNEP's strengths, work with governments in a strategic way, have the right people there, and think about timing.

Discussion

12. A discussion period followed the panelists' presentations, in which several participants weighed in on how civil society can engage with UNEP, and also asked questions of the panelists. Comments fell into these categories:

- *Engaging with UNEP.* Several participants voiced their personal experience either at UNEP or other ministerial conferences. One participant noted that while there may be some justifiable reasons to exclude civil society from meetings (e.g., undersize meeting rooms) there are usually other opportunities to engage in valuable interchanges. Another participant stated that civil society organizations can use the Regional Statement to take responsibility for actions that the region's respective governments will not.
- *Procedural issues regarding the GCSF and North American Regional Statement.* Several participants asked questions regarding the format of the GCSF as well as which other groups will attend and make statements. Various participants offered their knowledge, and indicated that groups including youth, women, and industry would all make their own statements. Other participants voiced their views on what should be included in the North American statement, including remembering problems of the Arctic, global environmental justice, and disproportionate consumption. Some participants suggested that engaging with local NGOs in Dubai would help facilitate logistics for those North American CSOs that attend the GCSF.
- *Strategy for recommendations on policy issues.* The format in which recommendations should be made was also discussed. One participant stated that there is room for both "fuzzy and warm" as well as "tangible and discrete" recommendations, provided that all of them are good, realistic ideas. One participant stressed that in order to be effective, CSOs do not want to alienate their own national delegations, because the government will need to be part of any agreed solutions.

Introduction of the main policy issues to be addressed at the GC/GMEF

13. Next, the Facilitator turned to the three main policy issues to be addressed at the GC/GMEF and the Consultation. He introduced three civil society experts who provided an overview of each issue.

14. **Energy and the environment.** Mr. Marlo Reynolds, Executive Director of the Pembina Institute, Canada, discussed his work at Pembina which includes climate change, energy policy, and carbon capture and storage. He discussed the impacts of disproportionate consumption, and gave examples of this problem in Alberta. He also stressed the importance of responding to natural disasters with sustainability in mind, specifically focusing on energy efficiency to improve the quality of life.

15. A brief discussion period followed. One participant asked what UNEP can do with regard to energy and environment issues. Mr. Reynolds stated that promoting renewables and photovoltaics are commonly overlooked opportunities, and that for photovoltaics, there is a

commercial uptake challenge, not a supply challenge. He also mentioned that UNEP could be useful in setting an example of how to be energy efficient in our economy. The point was also raised that it is important to reframe the energy discussion to focus on what the actual energy services are, and move away from an exclusive or primary concern with how to produce more energy.

16. **Chemicals management.** Mr. Jack Weinberg, United States, Northern Co-chair of the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), described IPEN, a worldwide NGO network, and its expanding approach to chemicals policy. He surveyed important international instruments that aim to control chemicals, beginning with Agenda 21 and leading up to the legally binding Stockholm Convention. He detailed the importance of Stockholm because it was the first legally binding global instrument to require countries to include chemicals management at the national level. Mr. Weinberg also mentioned that NGOs have been developing positive approaches and working with governments, showing a real desire to attain policy and resource input and get the means to achieve it.

17. In the question and discussion period that followed this presentation, participants talked about suggestions that UNEP might find useful to persuade wealthy governments to give support to countries in need of chemical management infrastructure. Some ideas that were mentioned were: calling for a new GEF operational program with a chemicals focal area, integrating chemicals management into national poverty reduction and sustainable development strategies, and internalizing the costs of chemicals management so that they are borne by the industry. One participant mentioned that the Canadian perspective is to follow through with aid distribution, especially for specific natural disasters. Participants also discussed UNEP's strategic role in providing resources and influence to parties of multilateral environmental agreements, such as the Stockholm Convention. One participant noted that while the primary responsibility in implementing these conventions is on the parties, UNEP has projects in the GEF division that are helping countries to implement these objectives, in addition to the Green Customs Initiative that helps countries to identify chemicals as they cross borders.

18. **Tourism and the environment.** Ms. Zoe Chafe, of the International Ecotourism Society (TIES) and the Worldwatch Institute, United States, described ecotourism as a niche market, distinct from sustainable tourism. Ecotourism is defined as "responsible travel to natural areas that conserves the environment and improves the welfare of local people." Ms. Chafe detailed the needs of tourists, consumer demand, and the economic importance of tourism. She pointed out that 53% of U.S. tourists have a better experience when they learn about the "customs, geography, and culture" of their destinations. In addition, 2/3 of U.S. travelers consider protection of the environment a hotel's responsibility, and 38% would pay more to travel with companies that protect and preserve the environment. Ms. Chafe stressed the importance of ecotourism as a tool for sustainable development and environmental protection, and that conventional tourism is often destructive regarding these issues. Finally, she described certification programs that measure the social and environmental performance of tourism agencies.

19. In a brief question and discussion period, one participant raised concerns over the impact of mega-sporting events such as the Olympics. Another participant noted that sustainability

principles should be applied to mega-sporting events, especially because these events have enormous environmental and social impacts on host communities. A participant commented that implementing sustainable principles into the bid process is one way to achieve success. He mentioned that the Sydney Summer Olympics were the first to incorporate environmental concerns into the bid package. The discussion also focused on rebuilding efforts in New Orleans and the importance of sustainable transport. Finally, participants discussed how ecotourism pioneers have the potential to invent solutions to local problems, such as the Zero Waste Program in Kovalam, India.

20. **Parallel working groups.** After the discussion and break for lunch, participants reconvened in parallel working groups on energy and the environment, chemicals management, and tourism and the environment. The Facilitator noted that there are nexuses between the three main policy areas, which were reflected in some of the introductory discussions, and that participants should try to reflect that fact as they prepared their recommendations for the Regional Statement. Next, the Facilitator named the working group chairs (Energy: Marlo Raynolds, Chemicals: Jack Weinberg, and Tourism: Kate Davenport).

Reports from the working groups

21. **Energy and the environment.** Ms. Lauren Sorkin of the Worldwatch Institute reported on behalf of the energy and environment working group, with Mr. Marlo Raynolds responsible for submitting the written report to the Facilitator. The report commenced with assumptions and recommendations detailing North American energy consumption, contribution to climate change, and the major concerns of the vulnerability of energy infrastructure in the context of more severe climate-related weather and disasters, energy security, and disproportionate consumption of fossil fuels. Ms. Sorkin described trade and investment-related issues, the impacts on human health and the environment, and links between energy and development. She stated that there must be an understanding of the linkages between energy access, poverty, and community development. Other important areas of concern were energy efficiency and management, access by the rural poor, and the framework for energy services. The report included recommendations for UNEP and national/regional governments.

22. **Chemicals management.** Mr. Daryl Ditz, Senior Policy Advisor, CIEL, presented the report on behalf of the chemicals management working group and also submitted the written report to the Facilitator. The working group based its discussions on a two-page draft provided by Mr. Jack Weinberg. Mr. Ditz placed the draft in context by explaining that the GCSF coincides with the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) in Dubai, which will be the culmination of multi-year negotiations on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). Accordingly, the recommendations in the draft are directed not only toward UNEP, but also toward the Governing Council, which is slated to consider adopting the SAICM immediately following the ICCM.

23. **Tourism and the environment.** Ms. Zoe Chafe and Ms. Kate Davenport (of SustainUS and EcoVentures International, United States) reported on the discussion of the tourism and environment working group. Ms. Davenport offered to submit the written report to the Facilitator. Their report focused on the role of tourism in the world economy and mentioned the

challenges and opportunities for tourism. These include managing growth; addressing impacts of, and contributing factors to, climate change; tourism's role in poverty alleviation; support for conservation efforts and pioneered solutions; and the health, safety, and security of both tourists and local communities. The presenters also noted the assistance that other UN agencies can provide, how UNEP can play a role, and the importance of building on Paragraph 43 of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

24. After the three working group presentations, the Facilitator requested that each group submit its written report by the close of business on 1 November 2005. The Facilitator then introduced the next item on the agenda, a discussion of the North American Regional Civil Society Statement and the election of North American representatives to the drafting session for the Global Civil Society Statement and to the GCSF in Dubai.

Discussion of the regional civil society statement and election of representatives for the November 2005 drafting meeting and the February 2006 7th Global Civil Society Forum

25. The Facilitator opened the discussion regarding drafting the Regional Statement and the election of representatives. These were the main points of discussion:

- *Content issues regarding the Regional Statement.* During the discussion, participants compared their experiences in the various working groups and noted the different formats of their recommendations. For example, one participant noted that one group made specific recommendations, while their group struggled to do so because there were so many pertinent issues to be discussed. This led to the question of whether the Regional Statement was intended for the audience of civil society, governments, or both. The Facilitator explained that it should be addressed to both, and in this context it presents challenges as well as opportunities. Another participant raised the question of whether the Regional Statement will be a policy statement or issues statement, to which the Facilitator replied that it should be opinion-based with recommendations on the specific issues.
- *General/overarching topics in the Statement.* Next, the Facilitator indicated that the Regional Statement will include discrete sections for each main policy issue, as well as more overarching suggestions that do not fit within, or are broader than, any particular issue. He solicited opinions on how to take note of these issues in the Statement. One participant stated that education is an overarching topic and should be included in this section, and other participants noted the overlap between issues such as tourism and education. Another participant said that the Statement should address the special circumstances in the Arctic in this section, as well as post-disaster rebuilding and development, as those issues cut across the three main topics.
- *Participatory involvement.* One participant stated that the issue of participatory involvement should be in the Regional Statement, including a reference to the previous year's statement and a request for an assessment as to how comments in that statement were received by UNEP and the Governing Council. Another participant shared his knowledge and experience from attending the previous GCSF to add insight to the issue

of participatory involvement. Other participants noted that there should be a feedback loop and also recognition by UNEP that the Regional Consultation and preparation of the Statement require significant investments of time on the part of civil society.

26. Next, the Facilitator turned the discussion to the issue of electing two (2) representatives to attend the Global Drafting Session in Bahrain, and four (4) representatives, plus one (1) chemicals advisor to the GCSF in Dubai. The World Harmony Foundation's generous offer to sponsor the five (5) representatives to the GCSF in Dubai permitted many more nominations to be considered and a more vibrant nomination and election process than in previous consultations.

- *Election questions and procedure.* This discussion revolved around procedural issues surrounding the election. One participant asked whether the individuals representing North America must be accredited to UNEP in order to attend the GCSF. The Facilitator answered that they do not. He further explained that civil society organizations who are not part of the North American representative delegation may also attend the GCSF if their organization is accredited to the UNEP Governing Council. Another participant asked if the chosen representatives must be experts in the three main policy issues. Other participants opined that while that should not be required, it would be useful to have someone who will understand technical language pertaining to chemicals. Another participant stated that the fifth and sixth-placed nominees should serve as alternates.
- *Nominations and voting.* The participants discussed the best way to conduct the vote, and decided on an e-mail ballot procedure, with each organization being eligible to vote for four nominees. In voting, participants were asked to consider gender balance and a balance between the nominees' areas of expertise. The Facilitator stated that at least one of the elected representatives would be Canadian.
 - *Nominees:*
 - *Drafting session:* chosen unanimously:
 - Mr. Glenn Wiser, CIEL (U.S.)
 - Ms. Emma Wendt, SustainUS (U.S.)
 - *GCSF:*
 - Mr. Dan Magraw, CIEL (U.S.)
 - Ms. Kate Davenport, SustainUS, EcoVentures International (U.S.)
 - Mr. Marlo Reynolds, The Pembina Institute (Canada)
 - Mr. Steve Cochran, United States Partnership of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (U.S.)
 - Ms. Zoe Chafe, TIES/Worldwatch Institute (U.S.)
 - Ms. Olivia Ciobotaru, Earth Day Network (U.S.)
 - Mr. Graham Saul, Friends of the Earth (Canada)

UNEP and civil society: Discussion of evaluation of progress and new possibilities of engagement

27. The Facilitator turned the discussion to an evaluation of the process, additional issues, and any recommendations. The discussion revolved around these points:

- *Resources and information sharing.* One participant said an online forum would allow other organizations without the resources for travel to participate. In addition, such a forum would provide a way to share information and solicit comments on the issues at stake. Another participant said it would also be useful to obtain the background papers and other information at an earlier date, if possible. One participant requested implementation of a follow-up procedure, so that individuals not attending the GCSF would be able to stay abreast of new developments. Another participant suggested a “blog” where people could post updates about certain issues or about the GCSF.
- *Technical issues regarding the Consultation.* A few participants voiced concerns over technical problems, such as difficulty telephoning into the meeting. Another participant mentioned that it would be useful to have meetings at six-month intervals to gather information across the network of issues, which would facilitate development of a more powerful document.

28. The Facilitator then offered to prepare a draft North American Statement based upon the day’s discussions. Consultation participants would have an opportunity to comment upon the draft, and a final draft would be prepared on the basis of the comments received. Participants would be able to opt out of the finalized statement if they chose. The North American Regional Statement would then be submitted to UNEP and used as an input to the Global Civil Society Forum Statement. It would also be presented in its own right to ministers at the GC/GMEF.

29. The Facilitator also offered to prepare a Facilitator’s Summary of the Consultation and to circulate it to participants in final form.

30. **Adjournment.** The Facilitator and Ms. Hilary French on behalf of UNEP thanked the United Nations Foundation for hosting the Consultation, and all the participants for attending and providing their input. The Facilitator gave special thanks to the World Harmony Foundation for its generous commitment to sponsor the five North American representatives to the Global Civil Society Forum. The Facilitator encouraged civil society to stay engaged in the GC/GMEF process and formally adjourned the meeting.

Annex 1

UNEP North American Regional Civil Society Consultation

Hosted by the United Nations Foundation

1225 Connecticut Ave., NW—4th Floor

Washington, DC

October 28, 2005

8:30 am - 5:30 pm

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| 8:30-9:00 | Continental Breakfast |
| 9:00-9:05 | Welcome, Duncan Marsh, UN Foundation |
| 9:05-9:30 | Introductory Remarks by Brennan Van Dyke, UNEP Regional Director for North America and by Glenn Wiser, Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL) (Facilitator) |
| 9:30-10:30 | Panel and discussion: Why should Civil Society Organizations Engage with UNEP?

Terry Fenge, Inuit Circumpolar Conference
Graham Saul, Friends of the Earth Canada
Daniel Magraw, Center for International Environmental Law |
| 10:30-10:45 | Coffee break |
| 10:45-12:00 | Introduction and discussion of the main policy issues to be addressed at UNEP's Global Ministerial Forum: <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Energy and the environment (Marlo Reynolds, Pembina Institute)▪ Chemicals management (Jack Weinberg, International POPs Elimination Network)▪ Tourism and the environment (Zoë Chafe, The International Eco-Tourism Society) |
| 12:00-1:00 | Lunch break |
| 1:00-3:00 | Parallel working groups on energy and the environment, chemicals management, and tourism and the environment |
| 3:00-3:15 | Coffee break |
| 3:15-3:45 | Reports from the working groups |
| 3:45-5:00 | Discussion of the regional civil society statement and election of representatives for the November 2005 drafting meeting and the February 2006 7 th Global Civil Society Forum |
| 5:00-5:30 | UNEP and civil society: Evaluation of progress and new possibilities of engagement |