

RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE REGIONAL CONSULTATION MEETING OF THE MAJOR GROUPS AND STAKEHOLDERS OF LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN TO THE 27th SESSION OF THE UNEP GOVERNING COUNCIL/GLOBAL MINISTERIAL ENVIRONMENT FORUM

Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago, 19-20 November 2012

Latin America and the Caribbean encompasses a wide range of countries, cultures and languages which pose unique challenges and opportunities. It is becoming one of the most urbanized regions in the world with one of the highest levels of inequality.

While there is growing capacity to engage in the current international participatory processes including the development agenda beyond 2015, the outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) and the Sustainable Development Goals, there remain socioeconomic disparities that limit the voice and access of citizens, particularly indigenous peoples, vulnerable women and urban and rural poor.

Civil society is diverse, fragmented and requires a supporting mechanism to improve its ability to participate in the decision making processes. Policy makers need to recognize that environmental challenges exist at the local, national, regional and global levels and require customized solutions at each level.

Consequently, we the representatives of the Major Groups gathered here:

- (1) Call upon the States as well as the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to implement the results of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, known as Rio+20, and to define the **Sustainable Development Goals** (SDGs), with the full and effective participation of the Major Groups and Stakeholders, conveying local, national, regional and global visions, proposals and concerns. Such participation should take place at every stage -definition, implementation, monitoring and assessment, including accountability mechanisms- and to this end we call upon the States to commit the necessary resources.

Accordingly, we urge the States to: (i) extract the lessons learned and best practices stemming from the design and implementation of the Millennium Development Goals, to facilitate integration and balance between economic development, social equity and environmental sustainability; (ii) recognize the relevance of the binding and non-binding instruments and encourage and reinvigorate local Agenda 21 and the Earth Charter; (iii) respect different worldviews on development including those of indigenous peoples and local communities. All of this in order to formulate Sustainable Development Goals making it possible to frame public policy and realign the priorities of international cooperation.

- (2) The countries' progress in applying **Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration**¹ has been uneven, and gaps remain between the corresponding regulatory frameworks and their effective implementation on the various scales, which significantly hampers access to information, full and effective participation in decision-making and the population's access to environmental justice.

We call upon the States to narrow these gaps, recognizing the countries' language and cultural differences, with the support of UNEP and international cooperation. At the regional level, we welcome the adoption of the Declaration on the Application of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development as the beginning of an open multilateral process launched for the adoption of an instrument for Latin America and the Caribbean, which is materializing in a regional roadmap². We call upon the remaining countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to join this process. As for the countries signatory to this Declaration, we ask them to ensure the participation of all major groups in the process of negotiating this instrument and that the Bali Guidelines be taken into account³ in its formulation.

- (3) In terms of the **environmental pillar of the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development (IFSD)**, the Rio+20 Conference constituted the loss of a historic opportunity to enable international environmental governance to take up the environmental challenges currently faced by humanity and the planet. The Governments' lack of political will in monitoring agreements, both on sustainable development commitments and on the means to implement them, has, in turn, caused profound concern among the organizations present at this Forum. Nonetheless, we welcome the decision to establish universal membership for the UNEP Governing Council; provide secure, stable, adequate and increased financial resources; and ensure the active participation of all relevant stakeholders.

- (4) Consequently, it is essential to move forward with a review of the **Guidelines for Participation of Major Groups and Stakeholders in Policy Design at UNEP**, and to do so within the framework of the criteria established for this review taking into account the contributions made thus far. In this regard, we must reiterate that our regional representatives —elected democratically in the framework of the UNEP policymaking cycle— should have the same status as the representatives of the major groups on the Major Groups Facilitation Committee (MGFC).

¹ Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration: <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/conf151/aconf15126-1annex1.htm>

² The countries signatory are: Chile, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay.

³ Guidelines for the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to justice in Environmental Issues:
<http://www.pnuma.org/gobernanza/documentos/Guidelines%20Access%20to%20Justice%20Corrected.pdf>.

Furthermore, we request that the Guidelines be implemented openly and transparently; be inclusive of vulnerable groups; have established accountability mechanisms; reflect gender equality; ensure balance among regions and cultures; and respect the limits of the MGFC mandate on decision-making. Lastly, we understand that to achieve broad participation the requirements for organizations to receive accreditation in the UNEP Governing Council must be amended, in particular the requirement on the existence of an international scope of action.

- (5) Regarding the **Forum of Ministers of the Environment of Latin America and the Caribbean**, we understand that it is involved in highly important processes, and we consider that we the Major Groups and Stakeholders have significant contributions to make in the form of dynamic interventions over the course of the Forum's meetings such that they may be taken into account at the negotiations therein.

Lastly, we urge the States of the region to implement the commitments assumed in Decision 6 on civil society participation and in Decision 13 on strengthening the participation of the major groups, adopted by the 15th and 16th Forums, respectively.