

International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives (ICLEI)

(Alternative) Ministerial Statement

We, Ministers of member States of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), met in Geneva on 24-25 September 2001 at the Regional Ministerial Meeting for the World Summit on Sustainable Development to review progress made since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit) in 1992 and to outline key policy issues, priorities and follow-up, in order to provide input to the preparatory process for the Summit in Johannesburg (South Africa) in September 2002.

I.

We welcome the Regional Assessment Report on progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21. We reaffirm that our region has a major responsibility in the global effort to achieve sustainable development.

We affirm our willingness to further increase our commitment to sustainable development and our intention to implement the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, and other commitments made in Rio and by the UN General Assembly at its Rio+5 session in 1997. Regional environmental conventions and “Environment for Europe” conferences should continue to play a significant role in developing the region in a sustainable way.

We support the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, which should focus on sustainable communities and societies, poverty eradication, environment and health, conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, promotion of sustainable production and consumption, making globalisation work for sustainable development, good governance and respect of human rights, and innovation and partnerships for sustainable development. The Summit should generate renewed commitment to sustainable development, achieving tangible results and setting specific implementation targets. It should call for a move from agenda to action, from plans to their implementation. The Summit should address the future review of the implementation of sustainable development and accelerate the development of an agreed core set of indicators.

We recognise the role of local-level action to achieve sustainable livelihoods and call for the further development and implementation of Local Agenda 21 strategies on sustainable development. We recognise the responsibility and commitment of all stakeholders and are determined to work in partnership with these.

We have identified priorities for action at the regional and global levels, which are laid down in the annex.

II.

The terrorist attacks in New York and Washington have shocked us for their misanthropic brutality. The cause of any terrorism is directed against sustainability.

At the same time we notice how risk-prone our cities, buildings, infrastructure, means of transport, companies and stock markets are. Our consciousness of the vulnerability of our modern cities, countries and cultures has been sharpened.

The past decades have been decades of growth, concentration, upsizing and acceleration of speed. We are working on even higher sky-scrapers, larger aeroplanes, faster trains, bigger dams... The pace of globalisation of markets and cultures has exceeded the capacity of many

societies and individuals to adapt to it, and many societies and individuals have not had real opportunities to be heard or influence the development.

We shall take the horrible events of 11 September 2001 as an occasion to pause and re-consider the path towards achieving sustainable livelihoods in the entire world:

- How can we reduce the speed of globalisation, and how can it be balanced by localisation in a human-friendly way so that the development takes all people on board and its benefits can be shared by all?
- How can we reduce the divide between rich and poor, between those who have always access to opportunities and those who ever loose?
- How can the diversity of cultures, languages and preferences be safeguarded, the global imposition of certain values, concepts and products be controlled, the various societies' cultures, traditions and pride be better respected?
- How can the industrialised countries show a friendly heart and face towards developing societies, share resources while avoiding exploitation or imposing inappropriate schemes?
- How can we reduce the vulnerability of our societies, settlements and infrastructure so that people can live with less risk and threat? How can we make a shift in organising our societies and settlements, from mono-centric structures to networks?
- How can we secure and share natural resources such as water, fertile soil, clean air and biodiversity as a foundation of healthy and peaceful communities?
- How can we more effectively support local initiatives for employment to create jobs for the unemployed so that families remain supported and young people are given prospects of a better life?
- How can we moderate men who claim and exercise power over women and children and deprive them of their personal self-determination and development, referring to various traditions or religions by interpreting them so as to support masculine powers?
- How can we support a more effectively education of children and adults to understand the concept of sustainability, and to respect natural and human values?

Let us strive for national frameworks that encourage and support community based approaches to sustainable livelihoods. Blissful souls, peaceful minds and constructive attitudes cannot be ordered by laws; they can only emerge from functioning local communities. We shall therefore support local Agenda 21 processes that build the foundation for common visions of all people, for achieving consensus on common goals for local sustainable development, and for the coexistence of different ethnical groups. Let us seek to de-radicalise those who are desperate because they are not respected, have no access to power nor see prospects of a better life.

III.

The World Summit on Sustainable Development must make people and national, local as well as community leaders understand that a better life cannot be secured without peace in minds, communities, societies, countries and on the entire globe. Peace cannot be secured without equity, justice, and equal access to natural resources and economic opportunities.

Sustainable development requires the appreciation and enabling of variety, of networks, of participation.