

Statement to the UNECE Regional Consultative Meeting by the Co-chair of UNED
Forum

I am making this statement as co-Chair of UNED Forum, an international multi stakeholder Forum for sustainable development.

Individual stakeholder groups are making their own statements and commentaries on the draft declaration emerging from this conference. In addition I am making this overview statement following a UNED-facilitated consultation between some of the stakeholders represented here. It does not represent a full negotiated synthesis of all the different stakeholder views. But it draws on all their contributions and seeks to give greatest emphasis to points on which major effort will need to be undertaken by governments and others during the next twelve months if a successful summit is to be achieved.

Gathered in the shadow of the tragic events in the USA last week we first wish to express our deepest sympathy and solidarity with all those affected. Terrorism must be confronted, the perpetrators brought to justice, security tightened.

These events also underline the urgency of the need to move towards a more sustainable world in which social justice, respect for the community of all life and of nature all unite to support a more harmonious and secure future for humanity. Sustainable development, social inclusion and justice and environmental security are all intimately related and reinforce one another. At ground level action programmes on sustainable development can be a crucial part of breaking out of the vicious circle of poverty, alienation and despair which is the breeding ground of fanaticism and terrorism.

Just as there is no security without collective security, so there is no sustainability without collective sustainability. It is essential to engage stakeholders representing all the different major groups in society in the quest for a more sustainable world. We are therefore glad to have the opportunity to join in this important occasion and to discuss together how we can best add our voices and our commitments to those being debated by governments in the preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development and its implementation.

Many of the stakeholders are developing their own programmes and actions across the field of sustainable development. In addition we are together committed to engaging with governments and each other in the preparatory processes leading up to the Summit, at the Summit itself and in the follow-up to ensure an action oriented agenda based on implementation. We urge governments to give full recognition to the role we play by providing full opportunity for active participation by stakeholders at all stage in the process and in the implementation programmes.

Turning to the draft Ministerial statement we urge first as a general comment that it demonstrates no adequate sense of the immense scale of the challenge of sustainability confronting us. The urgency of facing up to it, and the strenuousness of the measures that we shall all have to undertake to achieve a more sustainable future. Rio was a big event, generating big political energy and some big political commitments recognising our collective responsibility for the one world we all inhabit. our obligation to each

other to protect our natural environment and resources, and to promote social justice between and within nations. Since 1992 some progress has been made in some areas. But on many issues the world is continuing to move in the wrong directions, and many of the commitments made at Rio have not been fulfilled. At this stage in the preparatory process for the Johannesburg Summit we ought to be facing up to this challenge and pointing up the issues which will require substantial work during the next twelve months if we are to have a worthy outcome at the Summit.

We ought also to be seeking to articulate the overarching vision that can unite the many different stakeholders and the many different subjects and issues that are associated with sustainable development and give everyone a common sense of purpose and determination to bring about significant changes. We see the crucial element in a successful outcome to the Summit being a full recognition by the developed countries of the North of the scale of the problems confronting many developing countries in achieving sustainable development, and a full acceptance by the North of their responsibility for helping to resolve those problems through limiting their own adverse impacts, and helping positive developments in the South through better market access, technology transfer and financial support. Big changes are required, which will need political leadership and sensitivity and suitable transitional arrangements to protect those whose jobs or other interests are adversely affected. But, overall the advantage for the whole world in terms of more sustainable development, social justice and greater environmental security should make this attractive to the North as well as to the South.

The European Regional Prep. Comm. comes before those of all the other regions. It should accept a particular responsibility for bringing forward a set of progressive proposals on these lines to the Summit process, so as to provide the basis for a new global deal between all countries and stakeholders. Globalisation is already bringing all parts of the world closer together and integrating their economies ever closely. But so far it is also exacerbating inequalities between and within countries. Sustainability requires a determined collective effort to tame the globalisation tiger and establish a fairer basis for trade and other economic relations.

Our collective consultation has identified the following as some of the key issues which might be pointed up in this way for major collective attention and activity during the next twelve months

1. Principles and the vision. The draft Ministerial declaration reaffirms commitment to the Rio Declaration. But it does not discuss how to make those principles work more strongly in the world, how they can be promulgated and disseminated more widely, and used to inform and inspire decision-making and action. The Earth Charter developed by the Earth Council and others represents one powerful and eloquent instrument in this context. Could we initiate now a great discussion over the next twelve months between governments and all parts of society about how best to use this Charter to build a stronger shared sense of the vision and goal of sustainability, and crown this work with some collective endorsement for the Charter at the Johannesburg Summit?

2. Agenda 21. The draft declaration rightly reaffirms support for Agenda 21. But that is not enough by itself. If sustainability is to be a big and powerful idea in the world (as it

needs to be) the Summit ought to be an occasion for showcasing sustainability in big and effective action, and promoting it as a compelling vision for the new century. Creative events people need to think how to draw together best and most persuasive examples of sustainability at local, business and national levels in an exciting way. Agenda 21 and sustainability strategies need to be shown to be reshaping thinking~ and decisions, making a difference. It would be particularly important to demonstrate potent examples of effective North-South partnerships for promoting sustainable solutions in the developing world. And given the African venue this needs to be linked with ideas for African development in particular.

3 Development goals and the eradication of poverty. The draft reaffirms commitment to agreed development goals for 2015. But it is not specific about earlier targets and measures particularly on the central goal of the eradication of poverty. There is general agreement that more vigorous action in this area is the largest single challenge within the sustainable development debate, and the key to building a new North-South partnership for sustainable development at the Johannesburg summit. Stakeholders see it as vital to build concrete programmes for action and partnership in some of the specific key areas including water and sanitation and energy (particularly renewable and sustainable energy). There needs to be agreement on which bodies should take the lead in developing such programmes, and how new and additional resources can be mobilised for them. There should be specific discussions about how the decline in official development assistance can be arrested, and put back on a steady growth path, and how the debt relief programme can be made a reality and extended. There needs to be a specific negotiation during the year for substantial replenishment of the GEF and extension of its scope.

4. Conventions and legal instruments. The Summit should be the occasion for the ratification and coming into force of the Kyoto protocol (and the associated measures and instruments), the Biosafety Protocol, and further steps on implementing the Conventions on POPs and PICs, Desertification, and Straddling fish stocks. Implementation and enforcement machinery for MEAs needs to be strengthened. The integration of the environmental and social aspects of sustainable development in a new legal framework might be pursued as a new initiative.

5. If a trade round is relaunched at Doha the Johannesburg Summit process could be used as a means of exploring some detail the legitimate aspirations of developing countries for better market access to the developed world, and for elimination of distorting subsidies and other market practices in the north so as to feed some thinking about the requirements of sustainable development and a fair balance in the world into the trade negotiations.

6. Governance. There are many ideas for improving international governance for sustainable development. But several could cancel each other out or take too long to reach consensus. At the level of international institutions it might be best to focus mainly on strengthening UNEP which is a widely supported objective amongst stakeholders. UN"EP should be given agency status. Its resource base should be strengthened. It should be given significant regional capacity to support the emerging Regional Environment groupings. It should be given a specific role and mandate to promote the clustering of convention secretariats. At other levels sustainable

development needs to be build into the governance structures and objectives of national and local government and of the corporate sector and other organisations.

7 Stakeholder participation. The Summit could be made the occasion for strengthening and consolidating the process for engaging stakeholders in the international sustainable development debate and action. Stakeholders have grown in authority capacity and responsibility since Rio. Those responsibilities should be linked to substantive roles for the further implementation of agenda 21 recognised by and established in partnership with governments. As well as inter-acting with Governments and international organisations they undertake many actions and programmes of their own to promote sustainable development at local, national and international level. They will be bringing their own reviews of action and proposals for the future to the Johannesburg Summit. The summit could be made the occasion for giving full recognition to this stakeholder activity, and establishing arrangements or a code for full stakeholder participation in subsequent meetings and action programmes. A regular stakeholder forum could be a valuable feature of such future arrangements. More broadly stakeholders need to be fully involved in all aspects of developing and implementing sustainability strategies and programmes at national and local levels. Frameworks for achieving this, such as the Aarhus Convention, should be further developed.

The sustainable development agenda is broader than the environment agenda, although it includes it. In particular it seeks to bring together the quest for greater social justice in our communities, in our workplaces, in our gender relations, and in our international relations with the determination to protect the environment and natural resources. The pursuit of sustainable development therefore naturally brings together stakeholders from all the major groups and sectors of society. The commitments to be made at Johannesburg needs to be deliverable. They will need political will and leadership by government and also ownership and buy-in from all sectors of society. The stakeholders involved in our consultation have reaffirmed their intention to work together with each other and with governments to turn words into action

Some have long experience and commitment to the cause of sustainable development, going back to the Stockholm Conference and earlier. The insights of Youth and newcomers bring new energy and to the debate. Some are old campaigners at international level. Others are achieving remarkable results at local level, on the shop floor and often against very unpromising circumstances. All however are united in their enthusiasm and determination to use the Summit process to re-awaken and re-energise world commitment and action for sustainability. We look to the heads of governments, ministers, and other leaders and champions to commit themselves now to coming to Johannesburg and to rise to this challenge of working with all of us for a more sustainable future.

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