WFUNA CONTRIBUTION TO RIO +20 COMPILATION DOCUMENT

Summary

The World Federation of United Nations Associations welcomes the UNCSD’s invitation to contribute to the Rio +20 Outcome document, as the voices of global citizens must be heard and incorporated into successful international sustainable development strategy. The United Nations system has, since the 1992 Rio Earth Summit, made special efforts to include civil society in the sustainable development arena, and WFUNA applauds this effort. More than ever, these voices must be given weight in order to strengthen political will to act on the issues that matter to citizens of the world: global poverty, climate change mitigation and adaptation, human rights, gender equality, and access to education.

WFUNA is a global non-profit organization working for a stronger and more effective United Nations. Established in 1946, we represent and coordinate a membership of over 100 United Nations Associations (UNAs) and their thousands of members. We work to build a better world by strengthening and improving the United Nations, through the engagement of people who share a global mindset and support international cooperation – global citizens.

The following are WFUNA’s direct responses to the questions presented by the UNCSD. While positions expressed in the document do not represent the views of all of our member UNAs, ideas in the document are drawn from priority areas identified by the recent survey of member UNA Rio +20 activities. Given WFUNA’s mandate, we advocate for a stronger, more effective, and more representative global environmental organization, created by the upgrading of UNEP to a specialized agency. As Maurice F. Strong stated on 25 October, the environment should no longer be treated as a sector, but as a systemic issue.

a. What are the expectations for the outcome of Rio+20, and what are the concrete proposals in this regard, including views on a possible structure of the Outcome document?

Rio+20 should give way to a clear, action-oriented outcome document, produced with the participation of all major stakeholders, including governments and civil society groups. The text should present a global commitment to living within planetary boundaries through a fair and just green economy, with an effective supporting governance structure. Governments should commit to achieving ambitious Sustainable Development Goals that compliment work done towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

b. What are the comments, if any, on existing proposals: e.g., a green economy roadmap, framework for action, sustainable development goals, a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development, or others?

First, the World Federation of United Nations Associations believes that the creation of a Global Environmental Organization, a specialized agency based on an upgraded United Nations Environmental Programme, is critical to improving international environmental governance, and to ensuring planetary environmental sustainability. WFUNA’s work is guided by the vision of a United Nations that is a powerful force in meeting common global challenges. WFUNA therefore works to strengthen and improve the United Nations.

Both Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and UNEP Executive Director Achim Steiner have promoted the fact that successful sustainable development is dependent on the strengthening of the environmental pillar. Over the last 20 years, this pillar has suffered from a dearth of resources. The outcome document should present the creation of a specialized environmental organization as a critical way to strengthen the environmental pillar. The document should recommend that the Secretary-General be requested to submit draft statutes for a specialized agency to the next session of the UNGA via ECOSOC.
Second, WFUNA supports the incorporation of the Secretary-General’s Sustainable Energy for All initiative into the sustainable Development Goals:

- Achieving universal access to modern energy services
- Doubling energy efficiency by 2030
- Doubling the share of renewables in the global energy portfolio by 2030

Given that nearly three billion people still use dirty fuels such as coal or traditional biomass, these cross-cutting goals are critical to overcoming poverty, social inequality, and climate change challenges. The world must care for the needs of our growing global population while avoiding increased emissions. Developing countries must receive international support through technology cooperation, capacity development, and finance for scalable green technologies.

c. What are the views on implementation and on how to close the implementation gap, which relevant actors are envisaged as being involved (Governments, specific Major Groups, UN system, IFIs, etc.):

National governments, in collaboration with Major Groups, should develop national action plans to implement those goals set at Rio +20.

Moreover, the first commitment period of goals should be set in the relatively near term, by 2020, to encourage immediate implementation while political commitment is fresh.

d. What specific cooperation mechanisms, partnership arrangements or other implementation tools are envisaged and what is the relevant time frame for the proposed decisions to be reached and actions to be implemented?

Rio +20 should launch a new a public/private financing initiative to help developing countries make the transition to a green economy. The global green economy fund should have a multi-stakeholder governance structure, similar to global health institutions, with representatives from developed and developing countries, as well as from the private sector and Major Groups.

4. Specific Elements:
   a. Objective of the Conference: To secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, to assess the progress to date and remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and to address new and emerging challenges. Contributions could include possible sectoral priorities (e.g., energy, food security and sustainable agriculture, technology transfer, water, oceans, sustainable urbanization, sustainable consumption and production, natural disaster preparedness and climate change adaptation, biodiversity, etc.) and sectoral initiatives that contribute to integrate the three pillars of sustainable development could be launched and endorsed at Rio+20.

Given the unstable state of the world economy, it is clear that the current balance between the three sustainable development pillars must be recalibrated. The world’s resources, while respecting state sovereignty, must be protected and renewed sustainably in order to ensure we meet our needs and the needs of future generations. WFUNA therefore advocates for a strengthening of the environmental pillar through the creation of a specialized environmental agency, a Global Environmental Organization. Moreover, an implementation arm to this organization should be created to support national plans to enact environmental agreements.

In addition, as the Green Climate Fund created under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change focuses primarily on mitigation, special attention should be brought to ensure the survival of those regions most affected by climate change.
b. **Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication:** views regarding how green economy can be a means to achieve sustainable development in its three dimensions, and poverty eradication; what is its potential added value; experience to date, including what has worked and how to build upon success, what are the challenges and opportunities and how to address the challenges and seize opportunities, and possible elements of an agreement in an outcome document on a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

In a speech given on 12 January 2011, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon explained: “Climate change affects everything from the health of the world economy to the health of our citizens.” The causes and consequences of climate change exacerbate the North-South divide and impede sustainable development. Ultimately, the broad scope of the climate problem requires the attention of all global actors – Heads of States, multinational corporations, civil society and individual consumers. While the lack of an international agreement on climate change has not given the private sector a clear signal to shift to a green economy, some multinationals have begun transitioning to a low-carbon economy. WFUNA’s Go Beyond climate change program aims to bring together corporations and members of civil society to find innovative and collaborative solutions for climate change, with a focus on changing consumption behavior.

Sustainable development, though, requires more than voluntary commitments from stakeholders. As UNFCCC Executive Secretary Christina Figueres said in a speech on 10 October 2011, the private sector can power new growth, create jobs in new sectors, help alleviate poverty and stabilize the climate. Rio +20 should send a clear signal to the private sector that sustainable business is, and will increasingly be, more profitable than business as usual. Moreover, governments must agree at Rio +20 to the development of an instrument ensuring the liability of corporations for social or environmental damage.

Moreover, developing countries should be promised investment in their green sectors and support in fulfilling standards to compete in international greening markets.

c. **Institutional framework for sustainable development:** Priorities and proposals for strengthening individual pillars of sustainable development, as well as those for strengthening integration of the three pillars, at multiple levels – local, national, regional and international.

UNEP should be upgraded to a specialized agency under article 57 of the UN Charter, with Universal Membership, more decision making authority, and increased budgetary autonomy.

Despite achievements in international environmental governance (IEG) through UNEP and multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs), the overall governance architecture still fails to effectively mitigate global environmental problems. By treating each issue separately, there is a duplication of effort, lack of scientific data sharing, and inefficient treatment of the root causes of degradation. Currently, UNEP’s resources are low compared to the Global Environmental Facility, an independent financial organization. In addition, decisions taken by the UNEP Governing Council (a rotating council of 58 member state ministers) are referred to the General Assembly, and scarce financial resources are inefficiently targeted. Moreover, as there are now over 500 MEAs, many developing countries find their financial and human resources stretched to participate in negotiation, administration, and implementation.

The organization should create an anchor institution to provide policy guidance to MEAs. The Conference of Parties of MEAs should be respected in their autonomy, but synergies should be encouraged where they promote the more effective and cost-efficient delivery of environmental services. This should reduce administrative costs of secretariats and liberate resources for implementation at the national level. Future MEAs should be negotiated under the auspices of this new organization, reducing the current treaty fragmentation and doubling the effectiveness of resources developed over the past decades. The relationship with civil society should be strengthened and formalized through an inclusive voting structure. A new implementation body in the organization should financially and technically support developing and least developed countries to meet their MEA commitments. Currently, all eight of UNEP’s divisions have monitoring, assessment,
and reporting responsibilities, creating redundancies. Moreover, resources for review mechanisms could be pooled into a comprehensive system whereby reporting could be streamlined into one document, and submitted to one body. This move would use significantly less national government administrative resources.

That the environmental pillar is weakest has severe implications for the success of the two other pillars of sustainable development. The environmental pillar should be strengthened and develop a more coordinated and powerful policy voice — this upgrading will have cross-cutting effects in the economic and social pillars, as these both depend on a healthy planet. Furthermore, a Sustainable Development Council should be developed at the international level to ensure better integration of the three pillars.

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