

Conference of January 31st – "Towards a new global governance of the environment"

President's conclusions

The renovation of international governance for sustainable development is one of the two central themes of Rio +20. The objective today (31st January) was to advance the debate on two aspects of the institutional framework of sustainable development: the involvement of non-state actors and the reform of international environmental governance.

The first draft declaration for Rio +20, the so-called *zero draft*, does take both these points into account but is not ambitious enough.

Time has come for large-scale institutional innovation, twenty years after the Earth Summit

The 1992 Rio Summit was a foundational moment in acknowledging that "environmental issues are best handled with the participation of all concerned citizens, at the relevant level" (Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration). The involvement of non-state actors is essential, both at international level and close to the field.

Progress has taken place at local, national and regional levels and experiments in multi-player decision-making have been conducted successfully on a global scale: examples include the Committee on World Food Security and negotiations on the Access and Benefit Sharing Protocol under the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (ABS).

Rio +20 should be an opportunity to build on existing experience, and take the implementation of principle 10 further. The majority of current participatory models are limited and compartmentalized. The establishment of nine ECOSOC "major groups" was the first post-Rio step towards increased participation in international governance for sustainable development, but the decision process does not make enough room for proposals coming from non-state actors . Thus, in the context of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, the voice of civil society representatives is not audible enough, or heard too late in the process of inter-state discussions. This prevents them from making a genuine contribution to the decisions. Their influence is therefore relegated outside of negotiating forums. Climate conferences, in which negotiating sessions and NGO-organized events (the "off" forum) seem disconnected, are an apt illustration of the gap between governmental decision-makers and civil society.

At a time when we should be taking immediate action to translate the urgency of sustainable development into concrete terms, non-state actors generally must participate in international governance by providing their views and expertise, sharing their experience in the field and helping shape public opinion and decision-makers by bringing a diversity of constituencies to the table.

Concrete proposals for a shared governance model to be decided at Rio +20

Today, it is possible for states to agree on methods of international governance that are based on joint preparation of decisions with stakeholders. In its contribution, the European Union has developed the idea of broader governance, and many others have outlined convergent approaches. Many official Rio +20 contributions by other states equally demonstrate their openness in this regard.

The aim should be to move to a decision-making process that gives wide space to scientific opinions and civil society actors, through effective consultation and structured dialogue with policy-makers. It is necessary to design a consultative member status for non-state actors, taking into account their role in the implementation of environmental objectives.

NGOs are a major component of civil society. It is possible to find ways for them to be represented in global governance, as evidenced by the 1998 Aarhus Convention. This regional convention on access to information, justice and participation in environmental matters is an example of broad NGO involvement in Parties' conferences.

Integrating non-state actors in their diversity requires recognizing the specific role of local authorities in progressing towards sustainable development.

This is a possible avenue renewing multilateralism in the area of sustainable development, in keeping with the legacy of the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. A formal, organized, efficient consultation of stakeholders can add substance to, and facilitate, decision-making by states.

In the last analysis, we have heard non-state actors in this Conference express the wish to have a body representing them within global governance for the environment and sustainable development. Participants in this body could help pave the way for intergovernmental negotiations and facilitate consensus-building among States.

WEO, as the specialized United Nations agency for the environment built on the basis of UNEP, could be a testing ground for such a modernization of the United Nations system, drawing from the experience of existing specialized United Nations organizations such as ILO or UNESCO or working with them to ensure the representation of economic and social actors as well as of science.

Rio 20 will be a unique opportunity to recognize the commitment of various actors in what should be a new approach to development and the progress of societies.