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**Commission on Sustainable Development acting as  
the Preparatory Committee for the  
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28 January – 8 February 2002**

**Secretary-General's Note for the  
Multi-Stake Holder Dialogue Segment of the Second Preparatory Committee  
Addendum No. 4: Dialogue Paper by Non-governmental Organizations<sup>1</sup>**

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<sup>1</sup> Prepared by the Third World Network, the Environment Liaison Centre International, and the Danish 92 Group, the three NGO networks invited by the WSSD Secretariat as the organizing partner of the Dialogue Segment for NGOs. In no way, do the authors claim or wish to claim to represent the views of all NGOs. An attempt has been made to reflect views as encountered in the preparatory process so far. The present paper has mainly been elaborated on the basis of positions taken by NGOs at the regional Prepcoms in the past few months.

### **Explanatory note**

The present paper is the result of a joint effort between Third World Network, the Environment Liaison Centre International, and the Danish 92 Group also in co-operation with ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability. This paper is an initial contribution to the Multi-stakeholder Dialogue Session of the second Preparatory Committee (Prepcom) meeting for the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD), and as the basis of further NGO discussions throughout the process. The paper collects the views expressed by those NGO groups that participated in the regional preparatory conferences and comments received via various e-mail list serves. Special attention has been paid to "Southern" NGO-perspectives to feature them strongly during the dialogues.

The authors do not claim to represent the views of all NGOs in this paper, but have made an attempt to reflect those views articulated so far in the preparatory process. This paper will further develop through discussion and dialogue in the coming months to encompass the 'common' views of the global NGO community, so far as and as broadly as possible. The present paper is a beginning for this process in which the aim is not to reach consensus on issues or priorities but to articulate the range of views. Even with continual discussion and dialogue, it may not be possible to include **all** views, given that our NGO community is too diverse and time is too short to reach all, especially those of us who are engaged in vital work at the local level. For that reason, this paper, and its future versions, will never become **the** NGO paper, but one among many that cover the diverse views and experiences.

**The first section** of this paper, written by **Third World Network** with input received through an Internet-discussion facilitated by ELCI, describes views held by the two network organisations as well as key concerns voiced by many NGOs and their networks on the reasons for the failure to effectively implement the sustainable development agenda since 1992. The section follows the four themes of the multi-stakeholder dialogue. **The second section**, written by the **Danish '92 Group**, and made available for discussion on the Internet, summarises and analyses the positions taken by NGOs in the regional and sub-regional consultations.

Funding is very limited for NGO participation in the WSSD preparatory process, and this was also true in the preparation of this paper. The authoring networks concerned will work towards ensuring more consultation time for the preparation of the dialogue paper for the next multi-stakeholder dialogue at Prepcom 4 and appeal to funding sources in this regard. The authors look forward to a lively discussion in further adjusting the content of the paper, and, perhaps most importantly, to discovering our common ground now that we stand at the cross-roads of international sustainable development co-operation.

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## **INTRODUCTION: BACKDROP TO THE WSSD PROCESS<sup>2</sup>**

1. The preparations for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) take place against a gloomy backdrop. The World Bank Development Report 2000-2001: *Attacking Poverty* states that "*(t)he World has deep poverty amid plenty. Of the world's 6 billion people, 2.8 billion – almost half – live on less than \$2 a day, and 1.2 billion – a fifth – live on less than \$1 a day, with 44 per cent living in South Asia...The average income of the richest 20 countries is 37 times the average in the poorest 20 – a gap that has doubled in the past 40 years.*" The World Bank Environment Strategy concludes that: "*(e)conomic development ...(g)ains have been unevenly distributed, and a large part of the world's population remains desperately poor. At the same*

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<sup>2</sup> Sources for this section are: *World Development Report 2000/2001: Attacking Poverty*, World Bank; *Living Planet Report 2000*, World Wide Fund for Nature; and *Making Sustainable Commitments: An Environmental Strategy for the World Bank*, World Bank.

*time, environmental factors such as indoor and outdoor air pollution, waterborne diseases, and exposure to toxic chemicals threaten the health of millions of people, and natural resources – land, water, and forests – are being degraded at alarming rates in many countries...The economic costs of environmental degradation have been estimated at 4 to 8 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) annually in many developing countries.”*

2. The Living Planet Report, produced by WWF and partners, found that in 1996 the Ecological Footprint of people exceeded “*the existing biologically productive space per person by about 30%, or more if some space is reserved exclusively for other species. In other words, humanity's Ecological Footprint was at least 30% larger than the area available. This overshoot leads to a gradual depletion of the earth's natural capital stock, as reflected by the decline in the Living Planet Index.*” A great many assessments of the state of the world and trends since Rio are being prepared for the WSSD; these are expected to demonstrate continuing negative trends.

## **SECTION I: ASSESSMENT OF PROGRESS IN IMPLEMENTING CHAPTER 27 OF AGENDA 21**

3. The review and assessment of progress in implementing sustainable development at Prepcom II has two major dimensions with regards to NGOs. First, NGO perspectives on the failure of the promises and commitments of “sustainable development” and the concomitant triumph of the globalization and liberalization paradigm manifested in the World Trade Organisation, Bretton Woods institutions and the increased wealth and power of trans-national corporations (TNCs) often supported by exported credit agencies. Secondly, the role of NGOs as partners for sustainable development as envisaged in Chapter 27 of Agenda 21.

4. The globalization and liberalization process that has swept the world in the last two decades is today acknowledged to create deep inequities. That process has intensified in the years after UNCED. The crux of the problem is the unequal distribution of power and wealth in the world, both within and between countries. The massive protests at major global conferences and the unreported local protests by civil society against the pitfalls of globalization are growing – these are signs of the crisis of sustainable development.

5. For NGOs and civil society to be effective in promoting more sustainable livelihoods, civil society must have rights and political opportunity to interact with governments and participate meaningfully in decision-making processes at the national level. Irrespective of national realities, civil society (especially indigenous peoples and local communities) has had considerable success in maintaining and promoting good practices and innovative experiences relating to sustainable development. There is growing documentation of these good practices, both by NGOs, research institutions and UN agencies. However, these are often threatened or not mainstreamed into policy due to lack of institutional support.

6. Civil society actors have played significant roles to investigate, monitor, expose and educate – be it the performance of national governments, regional and international financial institutions and trade organizations/agreements. However, there is still much to strengthen and learn from experiences over the past decade: the linkages among sectoral and cross-cutting issues; informed

knowledge of decision-making mechanisms; linkages among partners at the local, national, regional and global levels. The diversity and flexibility of civil society has the potential to influence and shape the sustainable development agenda. For this to be realized governments need to ensure the political space for that to take place.

7. Good governance is equally needed at the global level. But the major countries refuse to democratise at the international level, where the global decisions are taken mainly by the G8, OECD, the Bretton Woods institutions or the WTO, without the adequate participation of smaller nations, let alone civil society. Developed nations pressure poorer countries to liberalise their economies, but they continue to practise protectionism when they insist on patenting their technologies, practise bio-piracy, and do not open their doors to the products and labour coming from the South. At the same time, many developing country governments also lack the political will to embrace civil society at the national level, and thus lack the capacity to mobilize global good governance.

8. Thus we need a democratisation and transformation of global institutions, and we need to inject people's rights into them. This can only happen when people's movements and civil society participate actively in making fundamental changes. We need to voice our concern about the concentration of wealth through existing market structures, with their ability to destroy the wealth of small countries through financial speculation.

9. These challenges to meet the goal of sustainable development require the full and effective participation of civil society. However, from the outset, it is important to emphasise that there must be a distinction between the private sector (especially TNCs and financial institutions) and citizens' organizations (both formal and informal). It would be a false start to assume that all groups are "equal stakeholders". The reality is that vast majorities of our societies are 'unorganized' for purposes of engagement with formal structures, with many being marginalized from development. Governments individually and collectively thus have a big responsibility to be an arbiter of conflicting interests, recognizing that there are serious inequities (wealth and power) both nationally and globally. However, in an increasingly globalized world, the trend is that governments favour the private sector over civil society. Thus it is absolutely crucial that civil society members are full and effective participants in decision-making that seek to resolve conflicts of interests and rights.

### **Overall progress achieved in implementation of Agenda 21**

In assessing their efforts to contribute to the implementation of the various UN programmes resulting from UN Summits and Conferences, as well as MEAs, many NGOs and NGO networks share some observations and concerns. The UNCED process generated unprecedented levels of awareness around environmental issues, and the link between environment and development. There were high hopes and commitments to achieve the integration of environment and development in a new North-South partnership.

10. However, almost 10 years after Rio, the sustainable development agenda has failed to be implemented. While some progress has been made at the local level (especially by communities and some local governments with active NGO participation in many cases), the overall prognosis is negative. While there has been improved access for civil society and progress in concluding the POPs Convention, the Kyoto Protocol and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the

implementation of MEAs as a whole has been disappointing. In almost every case, there is even weakening if not outright rejection of the spirit and letter of MEAs by certain countries.

11. Instead, the globalization paradigm with its “free market” driven liberalization has overtaken the Rio agenda. An overwhelming number of NGOs identify globalization as the fundamental obstacle to sustainable development.

12. The ecological crisis has worsened, including: loss of biodiversity; deforestation; global warming and rising sea levels, with small island states being the most vulnerable; adverse climate change; unsustainable industrial fishing practices; inappropriate land use policies; biopiracy; new technologies with far-reaching environmental and health impact such as genetic engineering; industrial agriculture (including destructive aquaculture); big dams and resettlement schemes; destructive mining projects; water scarcity; deteriorating water quality; desertification and land degradation; air pollution; unsustainable tourism; privatization and commodification of land, traditional knowledge and the displacement of peoples, especially indigenous peoples; massive land reclamation projects. These and many other threats lead to economic and social insecurity on a large scale, as well as violate human rights to a healthy environment and livelihood.

13. Poverty remains pervasive and inequity in income distribution has worsened, within countries and between the rich and poor. There is a growing and unsustainable external debt burden in many developing countries, emerging economies and economies in transition, including those that once enjoyed relatively high economic growth. The causes include rapid financial liberalization in the post-Rio years that created an unstable international financial system (example: unregulated capital flows and speculation) and faulty policy prescriptions and conditionalities from the International Monetary Fund. The increased concentration of wealth, and hence power and influence, of TNCs often supported by export credit agencies and large domestic firms has created more unequal relations. It has also contributed to national and international corruption. Crippling external debt, continuing unfair terms of trade for the exports of developing countries, especially Least Developed Countries (LDCs), which are primarily commodity producers, also continue to be obstacles to the implementation of sustainable development in that natural resources are unsustainably exploited with little re-invested in development programmes. Recent documentation reveals that many of the poorer developing countries have in fact lost capacity in economic terms, over the last 10 years. This further undermines efforts to shift towards sustainable development, even if there is political will, as a healthy domestic private sector and viable livelihoods for communities are necessary for sustainable development.

14. The nexus between environment and development that was affirmed in Rio has been weakened, if not broken, in policy and political terms. With the unfulfilled commitments of meeting the 0.7% of GDP target and transfer of environmentally sound technology by developed countries, both the developing countries and the UN implementing bodies have been unable to implement sustainable development. At the same time, the more aggressive implementation of trade agreements (under the WTO, regional and bilateral agreements) has worsened socio-economic conditions and the environment in many countries. The 5<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference that adopted an even broader agenda for more economic liberalization, far beyond trade issues, will have a major impact on the autonomy and ability of countries to choose

sustainable development options. This in turn will further limit the opportunity for civil society to offer diverse options and proposals.

15. This failure to shift towards sustainable development is caused by the weakening of political leaders in almost all countries. In the developed countries and developing countries alike, poor political leadership has capitulated to the demands of corporate interests and traded off social and environmental concerns both domestically and internationally.

16. A major weakness of UNCED was the dismantling of the notion of regulating the private business and financial sector, especially TNCs. In its place was the notion of business as a partner in sustainable development, on par with all other “stakeholders”. Today, in a world that is more unequal with a small number of TNCs dominating each sector and exerting tremendous influence over governments, this concept of “partnership and stakeholders” perpetuates the myth that there is a collective endeavour, and that all players are equal and conflicts of interest can be resolved by roundtables seeking consensus.

17. Many NGOs are extremely concerned over the *Global Compact* initiated by the UN Secretary-General. By privileging the world’s largest TNCs (many of which have unacceptable environmental and human rights records), it underscores the inequities faced by developing countries, civil society, and non-governmental and people’s organizations at the negotiating table and decision-making venues. We note that some governments have also voiced some similar concerns.

Many NGOs and other civil society partners are thus **calling for a dissolution or substantial re-design of the Global Compact within the next 6 months, and it should not be used as a model or substantive input to the WSSD**. A number of assessment reports by organizations monitoring the Global Compact members will be available for the WSSD process.

There is a growing call for the governments at the WSSD to revive the important concept of corporate accountability, and not merely rely on self-regulation. There has been much emphasis on corporate responsibility but this depends on corporations voluntarily “doing the right thing”. Corporate accountability on the other hand refers to the legal obligation of a corporation to ensure socially and environmentally responsible behavior.

18. The principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities” has been systematically turned around so that developing countries bear a heavier environmental, economic and social burden in order for developed countries to continue with business as usual. At the domestic level, the poor and underprivileged bear the burden for the unsustainable consumption and wealth accumulation of the rich.

19. The limitations and failures of globalisation as a model, and the failure of governments to act in favour of sustainable development, has led to growing public questioning and demands across the world. The WSSD process offers a valuable opportunity for diverse NGOs and networks to contribute concrete ideas for policy, programmes and projects in sustainable development and more importantly, to galvanise political awareness and pressure on governments and institutions to take action. Many civil society organizations are committed to refining and submitting these action ideas in the coming months.

### **The role of NGOs as partners for sustainable development**

20. In the responses from NGOs to a questionnaire, as well as other assessments from NGO networks, on whether the past 10 years have seen strengthening of their role, some broad conclusions can be drawn. NGOs have played and continue to play an important role in initiating and supporting various local activities to implement sustainable development. The UNCED process witnessed a broad direct and meaningful involvement of NGOs in shaping the international agenda for perhaps the first time in global negotiations. In the 10 years since Rio, the profile and standing of NGOs, generally speaking, has improved at national, regional and international levels.

However, one of the biggest challenges facing civil society at all levels is the lack of fully integrated participation in decision-making processes. Despite big gains for NGO profile and prestige since Rio, most NGOs remain outside the decision-making machinery of national, regional and international bodies that determine policies. Rio proved tentative at best in its formulation of policies towards NGOs and Chapter 27 has proved to be a mere soul searching process, not a bold framework for empowerment of civil society within environmental governance.

21. The independence and sustainability of NGOs were also identified as crucial factors in ensuring that NGOs can play an effective role in monitoring and implementing sustainable development. Resources, training and capacity building in research and advocacy, project planning and implementation were emphasized.

22. NGOs themselves have vastly expanded their capacity to engage at the international level, such as has been seen in the Commission on Sustainable Development or the landmines treaty. Engagement with UN agencies such as UNEP, FAO, UNDP and UNCTAD has also progressed. However, there are concerns that the corporate partnerships between UN agencies and big business (in addition to the Global Compact) will create more unequal participatory relations amongst the various Major Groups. This could undermine public confidence in the UN and efforts to implement sustainable development that is people-centred.

23. The translation of Agenda 21 into national plans, municipal programs and school curricula, as well as the national implementation of MEAs and other UN Summit work programmes and plans, can all be attributed, to some extent, to the fact that the UNCED process opened the doors for NGOs vis-a vis governments and other agencies. Many NGOs have the trust of the people, and now the government machinery too has begun to engage in dialogue and tap into their expertise and skills. More importantly, in some cases at least, they are no longer considered adversaries but partners in achieving the goals of sustainable development. Much remains to be done to build upon these changes.

24. NGOs have made significant progress in raising public awareness through increased monitoring, information collection/analysis and networking. For example, public awareness of trade issues, and the role and impact of the WTO has grown. Outreach on the national implementation of Agenda 21 and MEAs has been undertaken by civil society organizations. More of course can be done, and needs to be done.

25. NGOs have also forged closer ties and genuine partnerships among themselves. Access to the Internet has boosted cooperation and capacity building among NGOs with access to the web and with regular electricity supplies. However, NGOs in many developing countries, and especially those working at the community level, still face problems of access to the Internet. At the same time, there is a need for continued support for other means of communication and information dissemination, including audio means and regular mail, and in the various local languages.

26. Women's organisations and networks have played a significant role in shaping the discussions on sustainable development, implementing concrete projects and advocating the formal participation of women at all levels of decision-making. However, progress in the last area is still unsatisfactory.

27. The conclusion and entry into force of the Aarhus Convention is a significant achievement since Rio, for enhancing the role of NGOs in the environmental arena. The challenge would be the extent of implementation, and the attainment of environmental justice in practice. The opportunity for other countries and regions to give legal recognition and protection to social, economic, political and environmental human rights, in the context of sustainable development, taking into account the diversity of societies, will be the next step forward.

#### *INTEGRATIVE APPROACHES TO SECTORAL AND CROSS-SECTORAL OBJECTIVES OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT*

28. UN Summits and Conferences of the nineties have all addressed the need for "partnerships". In order to ensure that action plans are effectively implemented Rio, Copenhagen, Cairo, Beijing, Istanbul have all emphasized the need to draw on the support of all segments of society - NGOs, the private sector, academics, media, women, youth indigenous groups etc.

29. To date NGOs have carried out several successful integrative campaigns that cut across sectors and issues. To mention a few, the campaign on gender sensitization is prominent. Women's groups have managed to get their voices across the board. The campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment that led the OECD members in 1998 to abandon the project shows how NGOs can campaign in the absence of formal institutions. The Brazilian NGO Hunger Campaign resulted in major political change in 1993. Concerted action by NGOs to establish an effective International Criminal Court is also an example of how NGOs along with like-minded States can exert pressure to negotiate issues. The UNAIDS has also seen the strong involvement of NGOs which has underpinned almost all successful responses to the AIDS epidemic. The recent successful campaign by NGOs and developing country governments to ensure that the poor and needy have access to affordable drugs led to the Declaration on TRIPs and Public Health being adopted at the 5<sup>th</sup> WTO Ministerial Conference.

30. However, the "successes" have been disparate and few. In policy terms, there is little integration at all levels. NGOs have often been reactive rather than pro-active, constantly caught in the dilemma between monitoring/exposing and advocating innovative approaches to integration of sectoral and cross-sectoral sustainable development objectives. Nevertheless, NGOs have progressed in identifying and understanding the obstacles to sustainable development implementation. The challenge is to be able to combine the various roles and activities, with a supportive political environment.

31. Overall, civil society participation in decision-making at all levels still leaves much to be desired. To start with, the independence of thought and action of NGOs is to a large extent a factor of the source of their funding. The untied funding field is narrow and highly competitive. Restrictions in freedom of speech and action are more the norm in most countries. While attitudes towards NGOs are slowly changing, contributed significantly by UNCED, the question of public access to information in a timely and reliable fashion is not the reality yet in most jurisdictions. This remains a priority if participation is to be effective. Access to justice is an even more contentious issue with very few countries affording locus standi to interested parties.

32. In general, effective NGO participation in sustainable development institutions and mechanisms is premised upon:

- Access to reliable information. This has not always been forthcoming from national governments. Currently, given new levels of security concerns, some governments are acting to restrict wide circulation of information.
- Access to information held by corporations, especially TNCs, and export credit agencies is even more restrictive. There has been widening claims by industry for protection of “confidential information” far beyond trade secrets and confidential business information. Information necessary for environmental impact assessment and biosafety assessment are two examples.
- Availability of structures and mechanisms for consultation and participation at all levels of decision making. Very rarely have governments set up mechanisms or structures for involving NGOs on a regular on-going basis. At best an issue-based approach is adopted depending upon the level of public outcry against any projects or development schemes.
- The existence of a level playing field and equity among the Major Groups. This point straddles the national, regional and international arena. Governments are increasingly comfortable making decisions with industry representatives and closing doors to citizen groups all in the name of privatizing and liberalizing the economy. In the process, the small and medium scale entrepreneurs, workers and farmers are left to fend for themselves, usually at the expense of environmental, labour and human rights standards. A clear distinction has thus to be made between the large and powerful TNCs and the smallscale firms and farms.

33. The experiences of the CSD in conducting multi-stakeholder dialogues (MSD) offer valuable lessons, both positive and negative. The UN Forum on Forests, and other UN agencies, also started MSD processes. The regional consultations for the WSSD also conducted some form of multi-stakeholder consultations. Documentation is growing on MSD experiences and other forms of civil society engagement with multilateral institutions, and these would be valuable for all parties in the WSSD process. With adequate time and resources, civil society organizations have been able to prepare well for the CSD dialogues, but in most cases there is frustration that the MSD sessions are separate and distinct from the inter-governmental deliberations and decision-making.

34. Where concrete decisions are made following an MSD, the follow-up has been disappointing. One example is the 1998 decision of governments at CSD6 to initiate a Multi-stakeholder Review of Voluntary Initiatives and Agreements. The proposal came from a range of civil society organizations, supported by trade unions, in the first CSD MSD on Industry and Sustainable

Development. The CSD adopted the idea, and responsibility to identify the elements of such a review was given to the NGO Taskforce on Business and Industry, the International Chamber of Commerce, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions and UNEP. A conceptual framework for the evaluation was worked out, but the actual review has not taken place, in large part due to the reluctance of industry.

35. An underlying concern that has emerged is that the MSD approach, be it national or global, may sideline other forms of participation. While it can be useful, it is inherently restrictive, especially in relation to the diversity of civil society organizations. Where local communities are concerned, the situation is more problematic, as can be seen from the inadequate participation of farmers, non-organised workers and other marginalized groups in our societies.

36. Another concern is the unequal status among the various Major Groups, which does not serve to further the goals of sustainable development nor does it augur well in terms of furthering the prospects for genuine partnership. This, considered in the light of globalisation that has characterized the global economic scene since Rio, can exacerbate the North-South divide, and the unequal power relations among stakeholders, eventually threatening the successful outcome of WSSD itself.

37. In the face of spreading demands for participation, some multilateral institutions, including the World Bank, GEF, UNDP, UNEP and FAO have been reviewing their policies and practices towards engaging and enhancing civil society participation in their decision making machinery and implementation programmes. Preparations for the WSSD are also an impetus for such reviews. NGOs that have participated, and those that have not, will also bring their experiences, concerns and recommendations to the process.

38. However, at other international institutions where major decisions are made, that impact directly on the goals of sustainable development, participation by NGOs is uneven at best and absent at worst. In the case of the WTO, for example, even governments are voicing their objections at the un-transparent and undemocratic decision-making processes of the WTO.

*OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEW IMPLEMENTATION INITIATIVES IN RESPONSE TO THE IDENTIFIED HOTSPOTS,  
CONSTRAINTS AND PARTICIPATORY NEEDS*

39. Some proposals can be drawn from various NGO inputs and initiatives: Further increasing and enhancing of the role of NGOs in sustainable development efforts would decisively contribute to the reinvigoration of the sustainable development implementation process. In this regard NGOs should have reliable access to information and not be impeded in their efforts to raise awareness of important issues at all levels, from the community to the global. Solid criteria or standards have to be put in place by national governments and international bodies to ensure that NGO participation and consultation is not perfunctory, that their input is seriously considered, and that their involvement is truly meaningful at all levels of decision-making.

40. NGOs should be assisted in strengthening their own capacities and ability to network with each other more effectively. Frameworks and guidelines for the engagement of civil society with

national governments, regional and international organizations and donors should be determined in an open, transparent and inclusive manner.

41. However, the precondition for any successful implementation initiative is the transformation of unfair and inequitable institutions and processes at all levels, so that good practices can be duplicated, mainstreamed and implemented. Strengthening the UN is a priority for many NGOs, since the last 10 years have seen the shift of global socio-economic policy making to the WTO and Bretton Woods institutions, with those organisations themselves increasingly safeguarding narrow interests that are antagonistic to sustainable development. A strengthened UN needs to be rooted in the spirit and letter of “*We the peoples ...*”. At the same time, reform of the global economic institutions is also urgently needed. Ideas and proposals have emerged but the political will is lacking. NGOs therefore commit themselves to addressing the issues of good governance at all levels, while working to implement and mainstream successful sustainable development experiences.

42. On the call for the WSSD to give priority to corporate accountability, the proposals from civil society organizations include: (i) **A legally binding global framework for corporate accountability and liability under the UN, that is determined in an open and transparent manner;** (ii) **A global system or mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating corporate performance;** (iii) **Corporate sustainability reporting;** (iv) **Reform of advertising (not just about “promoting sustainable consumption” but more importantly about the destructive impact of mass advertising);** (v) **Addressing obstacles to subsidy reform;** and (vi) **Regulating inappropriate corporate influence on policy, national and global. On the part of civil society, there is commitment to forge stronger alliances for corporate accountability.**

43. Ten years ago, governments and civil society participants arrived at a global consensus that business as usual was not sustainable, and a new partnership was promised based on inter alia, “common but differentiated responsibilities”, transformation of unsustainable consumption and production, the polluter pays principle, the precautionary principle, and a need to integrate ecological, economic and social dimensions if we are to attain sustainable development. We call on all governments and civil society members to reaffirm those commitments in their full integrity.

## SECTION II: SUMMARY OF REGIONAL NGO CONSULTATIONS<sup>3</sup>

### Assessment of progress in the implementation of the outcomes of UNCED

44. This section of the NGO paper summarizes the outcomes of a number of NGO consultations made in connection with the regional PrepComs. In some cases, additional information has been drawn from sub-regional fora, particularly where NGO participation in the regional events was limited or where the regional reports may not have adequately captured the richness of the NGO viewpoints put forward. There were difficulties with the selection process for and limited participation in some regional consultations, thereby influencing the outputs of those consultations. This summary can therefore not be said to be comprehensive or fully representative of the views of NGOs otherwise engaged in the WSSD process. In spite of this, it is possible to identify trends and commonalities in the various outputs. Every effort has been made to remain true to the spirit and range of perspectives that emerged from the regional NGO consultations. This paper does not represent an NGO consensus but is rather a compendium of views from NGO meetings. It was through Internet made broadly available to NGO networks for review prior to it being finalized for distribution. A more comprehensive review of progress was not possible due to time and funding constraints. Another factor was that the regional NGO consultations (as was the case with sub-regional consultations) put greater emphasis on identifying future directions than on assessing progress to date.

### Regional Views on General progress since Rio

45. The regional NGO consultations acknowledged that some improvements related to democracy and peace have helped incorporate environment into development processes and prioritized people-centered sustainable development. However, it was felt that this had not carried through from “principle” to “action”. This, then, is the challenge for the WSSD. It will include dealing with such constraints to progress as lack of institutional and human capacity, political will and a sense of priority, as well as inadequate public awareness, monitoring and enforcement.

Areas where progress was seen included the proliferation of national and local Agenda 21 initiatives, and the development of national sustainable development and cross-sectoral environmental strategies in some countries and regions. A few specific positive developments

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<sup>3</sup> Source materials:

*African Civil Society Position of the African NGO Forum to the African Ministerial PrepCom*, 15-16 October 2001, Nairobi, Kenya;

*Earth Negotiations Bulletin*, Vol. 22, No. 05, 06, 07, 08 (2001).

*Statement of NGOs for Meeting of Latin American and Caribbean Networks*, (English translation), 20 October 2001, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil;

*Report, Thematic Round Table for Western Asia Region*, 9-11 April 2001, Beirut, Lebanon; *Abu-Dhabi Declaration*, 4 February 2001;

*Statement of the Asia-Pacific People's Forum on Sustainable Development*, 25-26 November 2001, Phnom Penh, Cambodia;

*Civil society subregional report for the WSSD*, Preliminary report for the Southeast Asia Subregional Preparatory Meeting, 14 October 2001, Manila, Philippines;

*Recommendations of Regional Consultations of NIS countries on preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development “Rio+10”*, November 22-23, 2001, Moscow, The Russian Federation;

*Summary of Main Recommendations: Consultation Workshop of the NIS NGOs on Preparation to the WSSD*, July 2-3, 2001, Golitsino; *NGO Declaration, UNECE Regional Meeting for the WSSD*, 22-23 September 2001, Geneva, Switzerland.

were mentioned, notably the Declaration by the Council of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE) in Abu-Dhabi in February 2001. It recognizes the urgent need for poverty alleviation and improvement of living standards and economic conditions through environment and sustainable development programmers.

**Obstacles and Areas for further action identified in the regions**

46. Ten years after UNCED, NGOs see that unsustainable development is still the norm in all regions. NGO consultations clearly noted the failure to fulfill the Rio commitments and that this has exacerbated the socio-economic crisis, increased vulnerability and uncertainty, and made democracy in the world more fragile. As reported in the introduction to this paper, poverty is deepening, inequality and social marginalization have resulted and human security is diminishing. Pressure on ecosystems and natural resources is increasing, and the evidence of environmental degradation, unsustainable exploitation of natural resources and pollution is all around us.

47. There is a crisis of implementation of the sustainable development agenda. This crisis can be seen in negative social trends involving a growing gap between the rich and the poor, displacement and resettlement of peoples, erosion of cultural diversity, increases in refugees, violence, abuses of human rights, as well as ecological trends of increasing deforestation, loss of biodiversity, destructive mining and oil exploration, adverse climate change and rising sea levels, depletion of fish stocks through industrial fishing practices, inappropriate land uses, bio-piracy, impacts of genetic engineering and other new technologies, destructive agri- and aqua-culture, unviable dams, water scarcity and decline in water quality, desertification, air pollution, unsustainable tourism, urban sprawl, etc.

48. Failure in effective participation by civil society has been a major obstacle to implementation. Other fundamental prerequisites to progress are equity, including gender equity, justice and recognition of ecological debt, and an ethical re-thinking the values and principles that guide human behaviour. NGOs drew attention to the fact that non-compliance with Agenda 21 in their regions was due to lack of government commitment.

*POVERTY, UNSUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION IN A GLOBALIZED WORLD*

49. A common feature of the NGO regional and sub-regional consultations was the emphasis given to the interlinked themes of poverty, unsustainable consumption – particularly in industrialized countries, and environmental degradation. Globalization and trade liberalization were broadly seen as intensifying negative trends.

50. In the Latin American consultations, these forces were seen as contributing to “vulnerability.” The participants concluded that “(t)he persistence of poverty and social inequity in the region is the main factor in social, political and environmental vulnerability. Social exclusion, ecosystem deterioration, the build-up of risks and natural disasters call for coordinated and joint national and regional activities.”

51. NGOs were dismayed by the continuing widespread acceptance of an unsustainable development paradigm. The NGO consultations concluded that this model does not adequately consider the needs of the people and communities, including for employment creation. It was also stated that no one model of development is suited to all countries and regions with diverse

populations and circumstances. Inappropriate development policies and practices are increasing the vulnerability of people and ecosystems. The NGO consultations recommended: **A paradigm shift to ensure that development models better reflect human needs, including for sound and productive ecosystems.**

*Combating poverty and promoting livelihood security (Agenda 21, Chapter 3)*

52. NGO regional consultations determined that there has been too little progress on the elimination of poverty since 1992. As stated in the Southeast Asia Subregional Civil Society Report: “(p)overty...is both a cause and consequence of environment degradation. The poor are immediately dependent on threatened fisheries, forests and other natural resource systems for their livelihoods. The health effects of declining air and water quality especially impact on urban poor who lack access to clean water and adequate sanitation.”

53. The UNECE NGO Declaration emphasized that “(t)here has been too little progress on eradicating poverty since 1992. New issues have emerged, notably new forms of poverty in the CEE and NIS nations, while poverty in the poorest nations worldwide has increased. The relationship between poverty and sustainable development is a complex one, but it is clear that poor people are more vulnerable to and affected by environmental degradation.

54. Urgent action was called for to eradicate poverty. Some components of an action plan were identified: (i) **Equitable and sustainable access to and distribution of resources**; (ii) **Securing environmental and social rights**; **Review and reform of development finance** (see also **finance for sustainable development** below); and (iii) **Programs to achieve International Development Targets.**

*Sustainable consumption and production (Agenda 21, Chapter 4)*

55. The UNECE NGO Declaration stated that: “(o)ver-consumption by wealthy groups is often a cause of such degradation and can exacerbate poverty.” Resource use has not been within sustainable limits or the carrying capacity of the Earth. Over-consumption by wealthy people and nations undermines sustainable development and can exacerbate poverty.

56. Most developed governments failed to take up the lead after the Earth Summit emphasized the need for sustainable production and consumption. The ecological debt of the industrialized countries toward developing countries and countries with economies in transition requires radical changes in lifestyles. Part of the problem has been promotion of consumerism. Some areas with inadequate progress and in need of further action are: (i) **Green government procurement policies**; (ii) **Promotion of informed consumer choice and options** (see also **information for decision-making** below); (iii) **Sustainable and GMO-free agriculture, guaranteeing food safety and security and sustainable livelihoods**; (iv) **Reductions of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions**; and (v) **Energy conservation and increasing reliance on environmentally sound renewable energy.**

*Globalization (Agenda 21, Chapters 2, 30, 33, 34)*

57. There was widespread concern about the adverse effects of globalization. For example, the African NGO forum recognized that: “(t)he forces of globalization that have shaped the world and our continent in the last decade have deepened and entrenched poverty, marginalized peoples and nations, and accelerated ecological disintegration.”

58. The Asia-Pacific Peoples' Forum on Sustainable Development concluded that: "...sustainable development can never be achieved in the present context of globalization with its 'free market' driven liberalization...The Asian Crisis was a wake-up call to the real nature of globalization where financial liberalization created a very unstable international financial system - unregulated capital flows and speculation."

59. The multi-stakeholder Round Table in Western Asia considered that "(t)he situation at the regional level is also aggravated by the social and cultural impact of globalization on societies, including uneven distribution of the benefits of development, the rapid pace of technological change and the information revolution."

60. Serious concerns were raised about the failure or inability of governments to effectively challenge or limit the damaging effects of globalization and economic liberalisation. Further progress related to trade, corporate accountability, financing for sustainable development and technology transfer was proposed in relation to globalization.

*Trade, investment and incentives (Agenda 21, Chapters 2 and 34)*

61. Inequities and imbalances in the trade regime, including unequal trade terms, are obstacles to sustainable development. Experience shows that trade alone is not going to secure sustainable development. A number of NGOs expressed grave concern over the decisions taken at the recent WTO ministerial conference in Doha, particularly with respect to launching negotiations on "new issues" (investment, transparency in government procurement, etc.). This concern was based on a belief that unbridled liberalization and deregulation – especially in developing countries– would further undermine sustainable development efforts. Other NGOs participating in the consultations were more favourably disposed toward the WTO ministerial conference results. The NGO consultations also noted the lack of measures to promote technology transfer from developed to developing countries and to countries with economies in transition

62. The NGO consultations concluded that there is a need for further progress in a number of areas, including: (i) **Democratic mechanisms to assess the social, economic and environmental (sustainability) impacts prior to the negotiation of any new trade and investment agreements (including the new round of liberalization);** (ii) **Abolishing all environmentally perverse subsidies;** (iii) **Implementing economic instruments based on the polluter pays principle;** and (iv) **Developing global rules governing publicly financed investment, such as through export credit agencies, within a sustainable development framework.**

*Corporate accountability (Agenda 21, Chapter 30)*

63. Existing voluntary corporate social responsibility mechanisms are insufficient because they fail to raise the standards of companies. Governments have failed since UNCED to balance the power of corporations with the rights of citizens and labour forces, and to help deliver effective compliance with multilateral environmental and social agreements. Strong concerns were expressed about the weakening of political leaders in many countries combined with the increasing influence of the private sector. For these reasons, it was recommended that progress be made on: **Exploring regulatory approaches for TNCs, particularly under the auspices of the UN.**

*Financing for sustainable development (Agenda 21, Chapter 33)*

64. The burden of debt and debt servicing and the need for sufficient and predictable financial resources were recognized by the NGO consultations. As the regional preparatory process moved forward, there was increasing attention given to the Financing for Development (FfD) conference. In addition, consideration was given to the role of speculative capital flows and unsustainable investment patterns by the private and public sectors in contributing to unsustainable trends, particularly in developing countries and economies in transition.

65. The consultations underscored the need for: (i) **Debt relief or cancellation for highly indebted developing countries, and restructuring of debt for countries with economies in transition taking into account commitments on conservation and restoration of the environment and social programs;** (ii) **Strengthening and consolidation of multilateral financing mechanisms; Assessment of the Global Environmental Facility in order to expedite mechanisms for access to global environmental projects, as well as for local capacity building;** (iii) **Assessment of financial institutions in order to identify or create mechanisms for access to financing of local sustainability agendas;** (iv) **Achievement of the 0.7% of GNP for ODA target;** (v) **Support for the GEF;** (vi) **Reallocation of budgets from military spending to poverty eradication and sustainable development;** (vii) **Regulation of financial markets, controls on the movement of capital, and other mechanisms to ensure that financial markets contribute to sustainable development, such as the Tobin tax or other global taxes, and** (viii) **Establishment of transparent systems to ensure the effective use of international assistance.**

*ECOSYSTEMS, BIODIVERSITY AND NATURAL RESOURCES (Agenda 21, Chapters 9 – 22)*

66. Protection of the environment and rational exploitation of natural resources were seen in some consultations as fundamental principles in sustainable development programs in view of the need to combat poverty and improve living and economic conditions. The NGOs called for concerted actions by governments with the involvement of civil society to maintain and restore the ecological balance needed to support life on Earth. They noted that the quality of biodiversity and a clean and healthy environment had not been maintained. Few countries have developed plans or frameworks for achieving sustainable production and consumption patterns. No country has successfully decoupled economic growth from its ecological footprint and very few have prioritized this effort. They prioritized issues to be tackled, including the severe shortage of water resources, competition from different land uses, unsustainable consumption of natural resources such as forests and fisheries, deterioration of the sea and coastal environment.

Inadequate progress has been made in a number of areas, including: (i) **Policies and programs to protect and restore ecosystems with the involvement of civil society;** (ii) **Policies linking biodiversity conservation with poverty eradication, especially in local communities that live around protected areas, through sustainable use of natural resources;** (iii) **Tackling underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation;** (iv) **Integrated water resource management;** (v) **Participatory land use planning;** (vi) **Application of the precautionary approach;** (vii) **Assessment of the risks inherent in including plantations in the Clean Development Mechanism;** (viii) **Entry into force of the Kyoto Protocol;** (ix) **Climate change mitigation strategies, and sustainable energy and transport policies;** (x) **Policies recognizing the links between environment and health;** and (xi) **Ratification of the chemicals conventions.**

## GOVERNANCE

### Democracy and power relationships

67. A number of regional consultations highlighted the impacts of conflicts and wars, and of corrupt and oppressive regimes, on prospects for sustainable development. They called for the following types of progress to be made at different levels of governance: At All levels (i) **Promotion of democracies conducive to popular participation**, (ii) **Elimination of corruption and greater transparency and accountability in government affairs**, and (iii) **Resolution of conflicts**; At the Local Level (i) **Empowerment of communities as well as greater integration between different tiers of government**, and (ii) **Decentralization and considerable transfers of state resources to the municipalities**; At the Regional and National levels (i) **Formation of coalitions and networks of southern groups and countries to define policy proposals and obtain increased influence in international negotiations**, (ii) **Decisions favouring sustainable development at the highest political levels**, and (iii) **Arrangements to foster dialogue between different stakeholders**; and At the Global Level, **Greater democracy in global decision-making processes and international agencies**.

### Environmental and social rights, including to information for decision-making (Rio Declaration Principle 10 and Agenda 21 Chapters 23-32)

68. The lack of a rights-based approach to achieving global sustainability was noted. This requires recognition that human rights include the right to a healthy environment, including social rights, equitable access to resources, and the right of access to justice. This also includes the right to participate in decision-making and to have access to information. Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration states: “at the national level, each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, including...information on how to participate in decision-making processes. Effective access to judicial and administrative proceedings, including redress and remedy, shall be provided.” Inadequate progress has been made in entrenching such rights in binding agreements and programs.

The NGO regional consultations saw a need for progress on: At All levels, **Programs to enhance the integration of environmental and human rights**; At the Regional and/or National levels (i) **Strengthened implementation of existing regional instruments on public participation, or new regional instruments based on the model provided by the Aarhus Convention on Environmental Information and Public Participation**; and (ii) **Development of sustainable development indicators**; At the Global Level, **Participatory negotiation of a global convention, building on Rio Principle 10, to implement these rights**.

### Capacity building (Agenda 21, Chapter 37)

69. Inadequate progress has also been made in developing local, national and regional capacities and strengthening institutions to promote integration of environmental, social and economic policies. In particular, the NGO consultations called for: At the Local, Regional and National levels (i) **Capacity-building to increase consensus between governments and civil society**, and (ii) **Improved capacity to implement, monitor and enforce international agreements and to obtain minimum consensus for the Rio Principles**.

*Institutions and instruments (Agenda 21, Chapters 38 and 39)*

70. Despite promised made at UNCED, strong governance structures to support sustainable development still have not been put in place. Good governance should be based on accountability, transparency, subsidiarity and the participation of civil society. The regional NGO consultations called for further progress on: **All levels, Multi-sector and multi-stakeholder institutional arrangements; At the Global Level (i) Adequate global institutions to provide leadership, responsibility, compliance and enforcement, (ii) Credible mechanisms to monitor and enforce sustainable development commitments, (iii) Ratification of relevant multilateral environment and sustainable development conventions, including particularly the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety, the Convention to Combat Desertification and the ILO conventions, and (iv) Reform of the IMF, World Bank and WTO based on more appropriate and democratic governance.**

*GLOBAL DEAL*

71. The notion of the WSSD producing a new “*Global Deal*” was considered by the UNECE NGO consultation as a result of suggestions made previously by the South African and Danish governments, among others. Its objective would be to bridge North/South differences on key elements, including: **Equity** – eradicating poverty through equitable and sustainable access to resources; **Rights** – securing environmental and social rights; **Limits** – reducing resource use to within sustainable limits; **Justice** – recognition of ecological debts and cancellation of financial debts; **Democracy** – ensuring access to information and public participation; and **Ethics** – rethinking the values and principles that guide human behaviour.

*NGOS AS PARTNERS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (Chapter 27)*

72. Agenda 21 states that “non-governmental organizations play a vital role in the shaping and implementation of participatory democracy....(they) possess well-established and diverse experience, expertise and capacity in fields which will be of particular importance to the implementation and review of environmentally sound and socially responsible sustainable development, as envisaged throughout Agenda 21.”

73. The regional NGO forums acknowledged that the participation of civil society in decision-making processes increased as a result of UNCED, though not to the necessary levels. Some specific areas in which inadequate progress has been made were noted: **Civil society participation, particularly women and indigenous people; Involvement of young people in sustainable development initiatives; Recognition of legitimate civil society organizations and their participation in all phases and levels of sustainable development; Establishment of participatory National Councils for Sustainable Development and other participation mechanisms agreed in Agenda 21; and Increased cooperation between NGOs and the private sector.** Chapter 27 is considered in more detail in Section I above.

*SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS ON PARTICIPATION IN WSSD PROCESS*

74. NGOs experienced certain difficulties in the regional WSSD preparatory process. These included insufficient representation in the elaboration of agendas for the regional PrepComs and in the events themselves. Prepcom II will shape the format of the multi-stakeholder dialogues at PrepCom IV and the Summit. It will be important to avoid the mistakes made in the regional preparatory process. The difficult experiences with NGO participation in the regional PrepComs

gave rise to suggestions for ensuring the full integration of NGOs in the remainder of the WSSD process. These included: (i) **Informal consultations during PrepCom 2 between the WSSD Secretariat, Bureau and NGO networks (including those who participated in sub-regional preparatory processes) on modalities for PrepComs 3, 4 and the Summit;** (ii) **Mechanisms for enabling NGO participation in core events and discussions, such as plenary and working group sessions, not only in side events;** (iii) **Provision of financial and logistical support for NGOs to participate;** and (iv) **Inclusion of NGOs on national delegations.**