

Civil Society campaign: Generation Solution: in support of UN work on Sustainable Consumption and Production

**Draft for consultation
Venue Room C (North Lawn Building)
Saturday May 8, 2010, 11AM to 4PM**

Background

Changing global consumer attitudes and behaviors towards sustainable ways of consuming and producing is key to creating a safer, more equitable and environmentally secure world. How to deliver sustainable consumption habits is a challenge to all of us, including civil society, businesses, and governments.

This Civil Society meeting on May 8 2010, will help further our understanding of how to influence consumer and producer behavior by bringing together representatives from civil society from all major groups working at the frontline of sustainable consumption with Marrakech Process actors involved in sustainable lifestyles and consumption projects, consumer change specialists and businesses who have partnered successfully with governmental and non-state-actors to promote sustainable consumption and production.

The conference will build on the learning from civil society's "on-the-ground" work and the experience of the Marrakech Task Forces and their impact in terms of advancing sustainable lifestyles and consumption, as well as on the linkages with the JPoI and the momentum driven by UNFCCC COP15. The outcomes of the conference will drive further progress in the run up to marking the twentieth anniversary of the Rio Earth Summit in 2012.

Context

2010 has started with some deep-seated uncertainties. The high-energy civil society mobilization that accompanied the negotiations for a global climate agreement played a major role in raising the issue of climate change to the highest levels of government, despite not yielding the desired results.

There is an opportunity to maintain the momentum generated by the conference, continue to support strong government actions and increase awareness efforts at

the grass roots level linking SCP and climate change. Many NGOs and other civil society groups have recognized this need, and some have developed new campaigns such as the 10:10 campaign in the UK, which asks UK citizens to reduce their own emissions by 10 per cent this year. In addition, the Marrakech Process on Sustainable Consumption and Production, the intergovernmental process out of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, has raised awareness of sustainable consumption and production through consultations, research and developing new initiatives since 2003, many of them with civil society, though more integration would be needed. For example, the Task Force on Sustainable Lifestyles led by Sweden developed 9 projects in the field of social innovation, research for sustainable lifestyles and cultural diversity, higher education, marketing and communications. Much more could be done with non-state actors and major groups, especially indigenous peoples, youth, women, local authorities, the business sector which have had limited involvement so far.

Looking ahead, the UN Conference on Sustainable Development provides an opportunity to mobilize all these actors, including grass roots movements and other advocates and to demonstrate to the world's governments a growing call and groundswell of activities in support of sustainable consumption and production by citizens and organizations supported by them.

Bringing civil society together to move forward

Recent research commissioned by UN DESA, in cooperation with UNEP, among global opinion-formers found a strong interest in the UN using its convening powers to provide a meeting point for the countless organizations across the world working at their respective levels to inform, educate, and provide tools to people on how to consume sustainably. The role UNEP played in the implementation and dissemination of major projects on sustainable lifestyles and education for sustainable consumption as well as UNEP and UNDESA in the framework of the Marrakech Process on SCP also illustrates this strong capacity.

Major groups are uniquely placed to provide the consumer and producer perspective on sustainability. Many are working in partnership with consumer-facing businesses to deliver innovative solutions. The World Economic Forum has recently initiated a 'Driving Sustainable Consumption' work plan that brings together all non-state and state actors. In developing their projects and disseminating their results for further implementation, the Marrakech Task Forces have built strong cooperation with civil society and engaged the dialogue with the business sector. For instance, the Partnership for Education and Research about Responsible Living (PERL) gathers **the know-how of** researchers, experts, educators and practitioners from over 100 institutions and 40 countries.

The UN is ideally placed to provide a platform that would allow CSO's / NGOs from all major groups to highlight their activities to implement CSD decisions.

Bringing these ideas and initiatives together and raising their visibility is the aim of a consultation to be held on 8 May 2010, in New York, the first weekend in-between the 18th Commission on Sustainable Development. The consultation would benefit from the participation of major groups to CSD as well as encourage many other global NGOs and civil society representatives that do not ordinarily attend the CSD to participate. Helio Mattar from Akatu has already been confirmed, for instance. This conference would allow global civil society leaders, including actors involved in the Marrakech Process task forces to showcase the very latest ideas and initiatives on how to influence consumer and producer behaviors, including by using social media, provide an opportunity for peer to peer learning, as well as provide a platform for the creation of partnerships to affect the changes in consumption and in achieving the MDGs from the bottom up.

The objectives of the consultation would be:

- To help maintain momentum on sustainable consumption and production
- Develop indicators to identify successful SCP projects
- To show the level of commitment and involvement of civil society in changing consumption and production patterns by raising the visibility of their ongoing activities;
- Support major groups and civil society's effort to develop common inputs to the 10 years framework of Programmes and to Rio+20;
- To show the UN as the world's enabler, convener and committed to the sustainable consumption and production agenda;
- To share experience and initiatives on consumer behaviors between major groups representatives, SCP experts and Marrakech Process actors in order to identify key priorities for awareness-raising, education, communications and information, capacity-building on sustainable consumption;
- To foster partnerships, collaborations and innovation across different sectors, regions and markets
- Help assess how the new phase of the Marrakech Process on SCP could support these efforts.

Sustainable consumption and production

The greening of the global economy is very much in the news these days and we are riding the crest of a green-consumer wave.

At the same time, the 10 Year Framework of Programs on SCP is one of the themes of the current two-year cycle of Commission on Sustainable Development. To harness the unprecedented volume of global interest in sustainability, the Division on Sustainable Development is developing a campaign, "Generation Solution" to support the Marrakech Process on sustainable consumption and production by highlighting what civil society is already doing. The campaign will build momentum and provide practical help by brokering partnerships, facilitating networking and nurturing innovation via a web platform for citizens, NGOs, businesses and governments worldwide. Regional consultations conducted by the Marrakech Process on SCP identified a demand for such a platform for sharing experience and information to support regional and national initiatives. Its global reach will enable it to show developing countries as active contributors to finding solutions. We will also explore means and partnerships to outreach to groups without internet connections.

The campaign could be launched later in the year and be part of the DSD Rio+20 campaign.

Conclusion

This initiative could have an extremely positive impact on the UN's efforts to promote awareness on sustainable consumption and production, climate change, sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals. It would also provide an opportunity for the UN to support civil society's successful efforts to change consumption and production patterns. The combination of the event and the launch of the Generation Solution website would help build on the momentum amongst citizens, NGOs, and other civil society groups so evident at the Copenhagen Climate Conference, enabling more learning and sharing of ideas, boosting everyone's efforts to encourage changes in attitudes and behavior among people worldwide towards sustainable lifestyles.