

**BRIEF JOINT INTRODUCTION**  
**AND NGO MAJOR GROUP STATEMENT**

Monday, 30 April 2012

iii. Thematic discussions

C: Human Rights and Governance in the context of Rio+20 -- By Farmers, Youth and Children and Non-Governmental Organizations Major Groups

**1) Brief joint introduction [PRESENTED BY MARY GILBERT, QUAKER  
EARTHCARE WITNESS – 2 MINUTES]**

The specific components of the world we want, named by Section I, “Our Common Vision,” are in reality not separate. We pretend they are separable in order to discuss them more fruitfully. Similarly, in a human body we may speak about the various organ systems upon which our health relies as separate constituent elements, but we can never imagine them operating in isolation from each other.

Our planet, too, is best analyzed and understood as a living entity. Nothing on earth is external to it. When we discuss resource allocation, finance, land use, and other aspects of human life, we must not forget that all of these components are in reality inseparable, whether this interconnection is specifically pointed out or not.

On the human scale, whether we talk about economic, environmental or social dimensions, the locus of decision-making is crucial. We emphasize the high importance of subsidiarity throughout our discussion. In addition, we want to emphasize that civil society must be fully included in the development of sustainable development policy and decision-making at all levels of government, particularly in a strengthened Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development.

In Rio all countries agreed to develop and implement National Strategies and in Johannesburg to do so by 2005. Twenty years later only half of all countries have done this. Only a relatively few communities are implementing Local Agenda 21. A global program is thus needed to assist all countries and communities in implementing local and national strategies in an integrated manner and that is sufficient to achieve all of the sustainable development agreements and goals that have been made to date.

It is essential that governments move beyond their differences and agree on the most ambitious agreement possible that will move the world community to a sustainable future.

## 2) Statements by Major Groups

### **STATEMENT BY NGO MAJOR GROUP ON GOVERNANCE [PRESENTED BY KIRUBEL TESHOME, ETC GROUP, ETHIOPIA – 5 MINUTES]**

The Rio +20 negotiated text to date attempts to improve environmental health by inserting environmental “protection” efforts within a market economy system that itself is a major cause of the problem. Rather than trying to fit the Earth into the economy, we must recognize the Earth includes the human species as part of the whole, and that the human economy is just one part of it. Sustainable communities must be protected by both human rights and rights of nature. These rights to well-being of people and planet must be specifically reflected in the final Rio +20 text to ensure the mutual flourishing of humans, their animals and the environment, both now and in the future.

Accordingly, we recommend that “sustainable development” and the “green economy” be focused on achieving sustainable/green *communities*, that includes both human and environmental communities. The current, market-based approach distorts communities to serve the economy; this trend must be reversed. It is therefore essential that we shift to a commons-based economy based on the well-being of all people and of nature as a whole, which builds on all agreements to date in the area of human rights and sustainable development and takes into account all aspects of human society. The outcome document thus needs to include a call for a global program to support the development of an integrated, multi-sectoral community-based approach to sustainable rural and impoverished urban development to ensure that all people's basic human rights and needs can be fulfilled across the urban-rural continuum.

We call for the full participation of Major Groups and CSOs at all stages and levels of the future IFSD. The Committee on World Food Security in Rome definitely merits support as one of the most inclusive multistakeholder, participatory, cross-sectoral, intergovernmental platforms for supporting country-led processes towards ensuring food security and nutrition - themes that, including sustainable agriculture, are designated as a priority for Rio+20. Most importantly, the unique composition and working mode of the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), particularly its Civil Society Mechanism, should be closely looked at and incorporated into post-Rio governance mechanisms. The best practices of the Civil Society Mechanism should be combined with the best practices of the Major Groups including the authorization by Member States for Civil Society/Major Groups to self organize and be full participants in policy debates with the Bureau and the Secretariat for any new institutional framework after Rio. Such authorization has a precedent in the CFS.

With regard to access to information, public participation and access to justice, we commend the efforts of those Latin American governments moving forward to improve collaboration and accountability and hope to build on this and other efforts. While we have come a long way from Rio 1992 in moving from aspiration to reality with respect to opening official decision-making processes, in many corners of the world, we still lack forward movement. By creating and joining an international mechanism to promote these essential pillars of decision-making, member states will strengthen their own domestic institutions as well as the voice of civil society, while reaping the benefits of collaboration and shared accountability.

The Rio+20 draft outcome document and the push for a green economy have put undue importance on the role of technologies in addressing the challenges to sustainable development. This top-down "techno-fix" approach needs to be corrected and priority must be given to more holistic, participatory and bottom-up solutions. Rio+20 must reaffirm the precautionary principle, ban extremely dangerous technologies such as geoengineering, and establish participatory mechanisms at the national, regional and global levels to evaluate new technologies such as nanotechnology and synthetic biology for their environmental, health and socio-economic impacts.

We support the proposal for an Ombudsperson or High Commissioner for Future Generations as a means to ensure that intergenerational equity is taken into account in all relevant policies and decision-making processes. This institution would be charged with acting as the UN's principal advocate for the interests and needs of future generations providing an integrated approach at the highest level. Through their leadership skills, moral authority and vision this individual, supported by a small team would catalyse analysis and meaningful commitments that reach beyond the short termism of our current thinking.

We call governments at Rio+20 to launch a process to develop a global framework to support the implementation of policies and policy tools at national level that require and encourage large and listed public and private companies to develop and publish their sustainability reports on environmental, social and governance impacts. This global framework should build upon existing reporting frameworks such as the GRI and principles such as the UN Global Compact. Countries like South Africa, Malaysia, Brazil, Spain, Denmark, Singapore and many others, have policies (eg. national regulation) or policy tools like stock exchange's listing rules requiring or strongly encouraging companies to publish sustainability reports. We need to extend this practice globally in order to strengthen the transparency and accountability of the private sector, and level the playing field for companies' operations and assess how companies are contributing to national sustainability efforts.

NGOs are united in their call to meet the challenges of strengthening the institutional framework at the highest level of the UN by upgrading UNEP to a specialised agency and establishing a Sustainable Development Council, whether it be through the widening of ECOSOC or under the General Assembly. Irrespective of the two options, the mechanism established will have to incorporate and be based on the same functions operating with the same mechanisms, and give ample opportunities to integrate Civil Society/ Major Groups at all levels of negotiations.

### **Sub-theme 2: ENVIRONMENT [MGCY]**

- There is the need to afford in a cross-cutting way the financial crisis, the energy and food price volatility, the climate change and the biodiversity loss.
- The need to manage natural capital maintaining the vitality of ecosystems.
- Integrated and cross-cutting approach to the conservation of biodiversity.
- Strong legislative and executive actions to promote the conservation of oceans and seas, made through the highest level (UNGA Working Group on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction).
- Consistent with healthy people, communities, planet.
- Phasing out and redirection of harmful subsidies.
- Public financing approach for adaptation to climate change.
- Innovative finance mechanisms. two are gaining political momentum: revenue-raising from tackling international transport emissions and a tax on financial transactions.
- Support to the current efforts taken at the international and national level to regulate large scale land deals in order to support land grabbing.
- While calling for a shift to renewable energy, biofuels made from food crops and produced on industrial basis are not a sustainable energy alternative.

### **Sub-theme 3: RIGHT TO FOOD [MG Farmers]**

- right to food
- right to water
- peasant/family farmer rights
- family farmers are at core of sustainable development
- policy frameworks should consult affected constituencies