



Statement on behalf of the European Union and its Member States

By

**Timo Makela
Director for International Affairs, DG Environment, European Commission**

**First intersessional meeting
of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development**

**Session 3 (theme 2)
Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development**

**United Nations
New York**

11 January 2011

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished Panellists,

On behalf of the European Union and its Members States, I would like to add the following to this fruitful and indeed very interesting discussion: This theme lies at the heart of the debate on effective coordination, coherence and synergies among existing institutions which are responsible for different aspects of sustainable development.

1) We need to build further on the basis of the guidance contained in the IFSD chapter of the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation, whereby the need for better implementation is addressed from a clear forward-looking approach on IFSD. We need to build on and implement what we agreed on in Johannesburg as contained in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. Our stance needs to be forward looking providing added value.

In so doing, we need to bear in mind the many proposals to strengthen the existing architecture for sustainable development contained in the JPOI institutional chapter. Reference can be made *inter alia* to the role and function of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD); the essential role the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) can play in each of its segments for promoting the implementation of sustainable development throughout the whole UN system; or the promotion of multi-stakeholder participation aimed at enhancing effective public participation and involvement of civil society and other relevant stakeholder in society. The EU is ready to participate actively in the debate on further improvements to the institutional set-up and working methods, including within the CSD.

At the same time, we cannot close our eyes to new elements that have come forward since Johannesburg. They force us to be forward-looking indeed. The EU is open to participate actively in the debates surrounding such new elements. A new feature is a growing awareness that the economic, financial, environmental, climate and social crisis are all part of the same systemic crisis, which will never be solved if we do not tackle the three dimensions of SD in a balanced manner including in choosing a balanced institutional entry point.

2) To accelerate implementation, we clearly need a much stronger institutional framework for sustainable development. It has to be improved to address more efficiently and effectively issues related to integrated and crosscutting policy making in order to ensure adequate and equitable convergence between the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development. Such a stronger framework is also needed in order to do much better on the three overarching objectives as specified in the JPOI – poverty eradication, managing natural resources and changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns.

Sound multi-level governance is essential for implementing these ambitious overarching goals as action at global, regional, national and sub-national levels should be mutually supportive. Our efforts to strengthen the institutional framework for sustainable development (we) can therefore not exclusively focus on the global level. Here also, we need a balanced approach fully considering ways to strengthen relevant institutions and roles at all levels, putting good governance into practice and rendering action for sustainable development more integrated, thus more efficient and effective.. This approach underlies clearly the JPOI and therefore also its implementation and further evolution.

It is in this perspective that, today, at the national level, almost all EU Member States have their own national sustainable development strategies (NSDS's) in place.

At the regional level, the EU itself has its own Sustainable Development Strategy, adopted in 2001 and revised in 2006, which is providing the overarching framework in which environmental protection, economic prosperity, social cohesion and global responsibility are mutually responsive. Next to the EU SDS, providing a long-term vision, the core priorities for the EU are set out in the EU 2020 Strategy and its three mutually reinforcing priorities for a smart, inclusive and sustainable growth, promoting *inter alia* a more resource efficient, greener and competitive economy.

Many local authorities in the world, including in the EU have developed Local Agenda 21 – participatory, long-term, strategic planning processes to help local governments develop and implement local action programs to address local priority concerns.

Overarching sustainable development strategies at different levels effectively contribute to much needed vertical and horizontal policy integration as well as for fostering informed debate, and have a key role to play in a strengthened institutional framework for sustainable development governance. Their specific potential can significantly be enhanced through the work of administrative coordination structures for securing a high level focus on sustainable development policies and of sustainable development councils as instruments for the promotion of multi-stakeholder participation. National Sustainable Development Councils in Europe, for example, have contributed significantly to the development National Sustainable Development Strategies..

More generally, the role and input by the major groups cannot be emphasized enough. The EU acknowledges the importance major groups play, and therefore their views should be integrated into the preparations and outcome of the UNCSO.

3) We also need to have a very balanced between strengthening of the institutional framework for sustainable development, as explained above and, on the other hand, strengthening International Environmental Governance (IEG), the latter being based in any case on the outcome of the Consultative group of Ministers on IEG that met in Helsinki. Last but not least, in addressing the institutional framework for SD let us not forget that as regards the environmental pillar, work has already commenced on strengthening the IEG.

On improving IEG, the Consultative Group of Ministers, both in 2009 and 2010, identified packages for reform.

- In November 2009 they passed to the UNEP Governing Council suggestions for incremental improvements that are now under discussion and gradual implementation in Nairobi.
- Secondly, in November 2010 they sent ideas to the Governing Council on systemwide improvements for six “functions”, being : system-wide network to strengthen the science basis, a system-wide strategy for coordination on environmental sustainability, identify guiding elements for realizing synergies between compatible MEAs, create a stronger link between global environment policy making and global financing, a system wide strategy on capacity building and technology support, and continuation of strengthening of strategic engagement at regional level.

We need to allow the UNEP GC to decide on them and await that outcome in the run-up to PrepCom 2.

On the five “forms” options, being: enhancing UNEP, establishing a new umbrella organization for sustainable development, establishing a specialized agency such as a world environment organization, reforming the UN Economic and Social Council and the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, enhancing institutional reforms and streamlining existing structures, the Consultative group in November 2010 did not foreclose any option. The EU’s preferred option is the creation of a United Nations Environment Organisation or Agency. The European Council was very clear in 2005 about what it means: *“a UN agency for the environment, based on UNEP, with a revised and strengthened mandate, supported by stable, adequate and predictable financial contributions and operating on an equal footing with other UN specialised agencies. This agency, based in Nairobi, would make it possible to develop the environmental dimension of sustainable development in an integrated and consistent manner, and would cooperate closely with multilateral agencies, each using its comparative advantages to best effect.”*

During the recent Consultative Group meeting on IEG in Helsinki, the EU has been listening carefully to the questions raised concerning our view on this agency. For instance, one of the most recurring arguments against this proposal is the emphasis on not wanting to add something new on top of an existing and already heavy machinery. The EU agrees fully with this: the EU proposal is not about adding a new institution on top of what exists, but about transforming UNEP into a stronger body, still based in Nairobi, and reinforced with the elements quoted in the European Councils conclusions.

On improving the governance for sustainable development, the EU has already repeatedly emphasized that the process of strengthening of UNEP and its upgrading into a specialized agency for the environment should be a part of a broader strategy for strengthening the sustainable development governance in the UN.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.