



"Major Groups and other Stakeholders Forum"

Tui Atua Tupua Tamasese Efi Convention Center, Apia, Samoa

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European Union Statement delivered by Thibault Devanlay,
European Union Delegation to the United Nations

Susuga Tuila'epa Sa'ilele (Honourable Prime Minister), Under Secretary General, distinguished colleagues from civil society and government representatives, island friends

Talofa lava

Since I'm probably the first speaker from the European Union in the conference preparatory activities, let me start by congratulating, on behalf of the EU and its Member States, the government of the Independent State of Samoa for its warm welcome and its organization of this conference. From the arrival at the airport and the road to Apia to the conference venue and the cultural festival, we are truly impressed and honoured to be treated so warmly here in your beautiful country, so honourable Prime Minister: Fa'afe tai lava from the European Union.

Apart from welcoming you all to the civil society forum, I will make 2 points today, one on civil society participation in UN meetings and one on EU cooperation to strengthen dialogues with civil society in the Pacific.

At the global level, Civil society organizations, or CSOs, have a critical role in most, if not all, UN processes, including as regards the promotion of democracy, human rights, Rule of Law, gender equality and the empowerment of women, good governance, sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The voice and contribution of CSOs to various UN processes is vital, it feeds the intergovernmental discussions, strengthens their overall credibility and accountability. This is sometimes challenging for us governments, including for the EU, but it is essential.

UN processes related to sustainable development have greatly benefited over the years from the active participation of civil society organizations, building on Rio principle 10 and some achievements since 1992, including for the 1st and 2nd Conferences on SIDS in Barbados and Mauritius, inter alia through the so-called "major groups".

The EU & MS encourages active participation of civil society in such UN processes, and has consistently supported this. For example, we are proud to financially support stakeholder participation to many UN meetings related to sustainable development and the post 2015. Today, actually, the travel arrangements of some of you - and not specifically European NGOs - has been sponsored through this European Commission grant to UNDESA that amounts to 0.75 million euros. We also proudly sponsor another 0.75 million euros in helping CSOs to contribute substantially to those processes.

We support the continued and enhanced involvement of CSOs in these processes, even if it is not an easy task. It also helps to secure their implementation, well beyond governmental

circles, through enhanced ownership and complementary initiatives, through genuine and durable partnerships. Indeed, the transformation needed to achieve sustainable development cannot be made by governments alone

In this regard, there are 2 dimensions to keep in mind, that the EU is committed to defend at the global level:

- First CSOs need to access UN meeting room: this might not be terribly difficult for those who have invested time and resources in getting an accreditation from the NGO committee of the ECOSOC, but it is particularly challenging for those who have not gone through this heavy process, although their mission and experience is very relevant for a specific UN meeting. For those CSOs, the EU spares no efforts to ensure that there is a clear – and transparent – process of accreditation in every modalities resolution of the UN general assembly, but believe me, this is no easy task and there are still many reluctancies in the UN membership.
- Second, once in the room, we need to make sure that CSOs are actively involved and fully participating to the meeting. They should be allowed to intervene in discussions in a meaningful way, receive all relevant information, and, in one way or another depending on the nature of the meeting, submit and present written and oral contributions. The EU and its MS are committed to continue to support the substantial and active contribution of stakeholders, in the follow- up to Rio+20 and in establishing the post-2015 development agenda.

Let me now get to my second point by highlighting a few concrete examples of EU support to Civil Society Organizations in the Pacific.

In line with our commitments in the Cotonou agreements priorities, the EU is consulting regularly with CSOs in the Pacific. Although most NGOs in the Pacific are national NGOs with national mandate, the EU has engaged over the last years with the existing regional CSOs of the Pacific, in the context of the new European Development Fund, with consultative meeting in 2012 and 2014.

To help develop a stronger engagement of NGOs at regional level, the EU is also funding from 2014 a €4M Non State Actor regional program. The programme, which is implemented by the Pacific Island Forum Secretariat will allow for more a structured dialogue to be established between national and regional authorities and the NGOs. The programme aims at facilitating NGO participation to policy making at the regional level, building capacities of NGOs in policy development, helping NGOs to consult with their constituencies and to develop position papers through conferences, seminars and specific studies, where needed.

NGOs are also involved specifically in EU regional programmes, such as the EU Support to Trade programme – a very important element of the EU support to economic integration for the Pacific – or the EU funded Deep Sea Minerals Project, which has started engaging with civil society, including on the social Impacts of deep sea mining.

Certainly the EU can do more to engage even wider with the NGOs in the Pacific. For this, the EU has committed some €2.5M to be implemented in the region over the next years to help build capacities of NGOs. These efforts, together with the support to NGOs already existing at country level in Tonga, in Samoa, in Tuvalu, in Fiji, among others, bodes well for the future of EU cooperation with NGOs in the region

Fa'afetai lava

Manuia le aso

Soifua