

Brussels, 24 February 2012

Eurostep is a network of autonomous European non-governmental development organisations working towards peace, justice and equality in a world free of poverty. Its membership, rooted in their own societies, works together to influence Europe's role in the world, particularly in pursuing the eradication of injustice and poverty. It advocates changes in Europe's policies and practice based on the perspectives drawn from direct experiences of an active involvement of its members and their partners in development in over 100 countries across the world. The members of Eurostep include: 11.11.11 (Belgium), ACSUR Las Segovias (Spain), Alliance Sud (Switzerland), Concern Worldwide (Ireland), Deutsche Welthungerhilfe (Germany), FDSC (Romania), Hivos (Netherlands), Kepa (Finland), Marie-Stopes International (UK), NEWW (Poland), Oxfam Novib (Netherlands), People in Need (Czech Republic), Sloga Platform (Slovenia), SNV (Netherlands).

Mr Herman Van Rompuy
President of the European Council
European Council
Rue de la Loi 175
B-1048 Brussels

Subject: EU preparation for the Rio+20 conference on Sustainable Development

Dear Mr Van Rompuy,

Ahead of the meeting of the European Council on 1-2 March that will prepare the UN "Rio +20" conference we would like to share with you our vision for a sustainable future. Stakeholders' contributions should be taken fully into account in the EU preparatory process for Rio+20, since unsustainable practices affect all of us and enhancing citizens' and stakeholders' participation is a key principle of sustainable development.

While much of Europe's attention is focused on sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone and its potential implications within the EU, we must recognise that the current challenges to our global ecosystem that has been a result of the unsustainable use of natural resources is equally, if not more critical, as it threatens our very existence. When the international Community met at the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 there was widespread recognition that the continued over use of the earth's limited natural resources was unsustainable, and that it would erode the capacity of the ecosystem on which we depend, to sustain life. The commitments made twenty years ago were a step towards promoting sustainable practices which would be for the benefit of everyone.

While progress has been made over the past two decades many of the commitments made in 1992 have not been implemented sufficiently. The Earth's natural resources continue to be used beyond sustainable limits, with the consequences increasingly being seen, from the impact of climate change, the loss of bio-diversity, etc. The impact of the ecosystem's claims for repayment of this debt is being increasingly felt by people in different parts of the world, particularly those living in poverty and fragile environments, but it is our children and future generations on which the impact will fall most heavily unless radical action is taken.

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development that takes place this June in Rio de Janeiro twenty years after the first Earth Summit is a crucial opportunity to

Eurostep is a member of CONCORD

Eurostep A.I.S.B.L.

115 Rue Stévin, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

Tel. +32 2 231 16 59 ☎ Fax. +32 2 230 37 80

E-mail: admin@eurostep.org ☎ Web: <http://www.eurostep.org>

put in place the far reaching and radical changes that are needed in all parts of our lives in order to promote approaches to the economy and to society that are ecologically sustainable, and equitable.

The Rio+20 conference is an opportunity for the international community to revisit the way economic development is envisaged and put in place the actions and mechanisms needed to address the urgent challenges. It not only requires agreement on a common strategy that rapidly leads to achieving sustainability but a common commitment to take the necessary actions needed. It requires a strong institutional framework and effective enforcement mechanisms that guide governments and other stakeholders in fulfilling the commitments and agreements that have been made for achieving sustainable development, and which are able to hold them accountable.

The concept of equity, encompassing inter- and intra-generational equity, is central to achieving sustainable development. Equity is about fair distribution of costs and benefits and fair access to resources. It must guide any political strategies and actions, only by doing so will the balance of power be more equitable, will people be able to make sustainable choices and a sustainable path to development possible. An economy can only be sustainable if it is based on this principle. Hence, the principle of Common but differentiated responsibility must guide efforts for more ecological economies and without integrating the social dimension of sustainable development (striving for poverty eradication, reduction of inequalities, better equity and which empowers people, not least women) and reforming the economic and financial system towards more equitable resources and power distribution and increased regulation, economic activity will not bring about global and long term equitable prosperity.

The EU presents itself as playing a leading role in tackling climate change and on promoting sustainable development. Its credibility in playing such a role will not only be judged on the positions it takes towards outcome of Rio+20, but also in the actions it takes to mitigate the impact of climate change and to promote all aspects of sustainable development. Part of the answer will rest on the willingness of the EU to recognize its own responsibility for creating the current situation and act accordingly. It has to match policies and actions with the rhetoric puts forward in its strategies as well as the principles and values that it has adopted. Without strong political commitment and actions geared towards increasing equity, tackling power imbalances, putting in place strong regulatory frameworks and assessment and enforcement mechanisms immune to vested interest sustainable development will remain a blurry dream.

We attach what we would expect to be included in the outcome of this year's Rio conference for it to be at all possible to claim any success.

In the preparations for the outcome of the conference we urge you to ensure that it shows a marked shift from the unsustainable practices of the past, and puts in place measures that are truly geared towards rapid progress in achieving sustainable development.

Eurostep is a member of CONCORD

Eurostep A.I.S.B.L.

115 Rue Stévin, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

Tel. +32 2 231 16 59 ☎ Fax. +32 2 230 37 80

E-mail: admin@eurostep.org ☎ Web: <http://www.eurostep.org>

Given the crucial importance of the Rio Conference we urge you to participate, thus making it a true Global summit.

We remain at your disposal for further inquiry.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Simon Stocker', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Simon Stocker, Director of Eurostep

Eurostep is a member of CONCORD

Eurostep A.I.S.B.L.

115 Rue Stévin, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

Tel. +32 2 231 16 59 ☎ Fax. +32 2 230 37 80

E-mail: admin@eurostep.org ☎ Web: <http://www.eurostep.org>