

Key Recommendations for a Common EU Position towards Rio+20 based on the Evaluation of the Zero Draft of the Outcome Document

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), Keapa (Finland), Marie-Stopes International (UK), NEWW (Poland), Oxfam Novib (Netherlands), People in Need (Czech Republic), Sloga Platform (Slovenia), SNV (Netherlands).

1. The zero draft is too complacent and lacks ambition

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development must acknowledge that scientific evidence demonstrates that the global ecosystem is being degraded by unsustainable practices leading to an unprecedented planetary emergency. This can only be addressed effectively by a rapid transformation in approaches to development and the economy that respect nature, promote ecologically sustainable practices and diminish inequities. This requires:

- A common understanding of the threats and major problems we face supported by facts and data (UN reports¹, IEA findings), and of the consequences of inaction or insufficiently rapid actions.
- Acknowledgement that while prevailing economic approaches have brought benefits to many people, especially in the so called advanced economies, inequalities have grown both within and between countries. Future economic approaches must promote sustainable patterns of consumption, and ensure that all economic actors are accountable to the common good.
- Recognition that global inequality is a source of instability and must be addressed in order to ensure a sustainable world while respecting all peoples' right to development. Efforts towards sustainability must be proportionate to a country's per capita ecological footprint and the size of its populations.
- The major problems of inequality and inequity within countries should be stressed as well as the necessity to tackle them to ensure a sustainable world. Sustainable development is a multi dimensional concept in which primacy is given to human beings who "are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature" (Principle 1 of the 1992 Rio Declaration)

2. Necessary analysis of gaps and barriers to implementation

The UN Conference on Sustainable Development must identify and elaborate the key problems that need to be addressed to achieve sustainable development, set against an analysis of the implementation of commitments made at the 1992 Earth Summit and afterwards. Such a problem analysis must be the basis for the actions adopted. This requires:

- The specification and detailing of the challenges of current practices to achieving sustainable development, including the predominance of economic considerations

¹ Such as the recently released report of the Secretary General's High Level Panel on Global Sustainability, the Global Environment Outlook (GEO5) or the 2011 UNDP report "Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All" that provide data and statistics on the social, economic and environmental dimensions of sustainable development that exemplify the situation.

over environmental and social concerns, the reliance of the prevailing economic model on unsustainable consumption and production patterns, inherent imbalances of power, the use of GDP as the principal measure for well being, etc all of which have been well documented.

3. Strengthening political will towards implementing a common agenda

The 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development must re-affirm the international community's commitment to all of the principles adopted at the 1992 Earth Summit as well as the full implementation of past agreements and plan of actions. This requires:

- An explicit re-affirmation of the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), polluter pays, solidarity, and equity as well as the precautionary principle.
- Fulfilling and respecting human rights, based on the International Bill of Human Rights and other fundamental texts².
- Recognition that these principles should underpin future economic approaches so as to ensure that such approaches are compatible with sustainable development and contribute to its achievement.

4. Recognising real strengths and limitations of different actors

The 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development must recognise the specific roles of the different stakeholders to achieving sustainable development, and give equal consideration to the specific roles contributions that they can, and should be expected to bring. This requires:

- Identifying the specific strengths as well as limitations of the different types of stakeholders.
- Recognition of the responsibility of governments for ensuring the protection and well being of their citizens, and to ensure that long term visions prevails over short term interests.
- Recognising the important contribution that actors within the private sector can and should make to achieve sustainable development, while acknowledging the importance of suitable and legal frameworks to ensure their actions are consistent with and derived from the principles for sustainable development and human rights, and that they remain accountable. In this respect clear distinctions need to be made between different actors within the private sector and the roles that they play (i.e transnational companies, medium or small enterprises).
- Recognition of the role of civil society actors for voicing citizens' concerns and for contributing to holding governments and other actors accountable. Clear steps towards the implementation of principle 10 of the 1992 Rio Declaration on access to information should be set out and agreed at Rio2012.

5. A radically different economy to ensure sustainable development

The 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development must adopt a clear definition of what constitutes an economic approach that promotes sustainable development, as well as the general principles underpinning economies pursued on this basis. The approach must fully encompass the three dimensions of sustainable development and recognize their interdependent nature. Economies

² The International Bill of Human rights consists of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Other fundamental texts regroup the Declaration on the Right to Development, the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous people.

must be designed and managed to ensure social progress in full respect of the boundaries of the ecosystem. This requires:

- Reforming fiscal systems to ensure a fair distribution of resources and costs based on the principles of equity and polluter pays.
- Ensuring that reflecting the true costs of nature's resources in economic production does not result in speculative commodification of natural resources.
- Governments establishing time bound targets for phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, for defining the share of renewable sources of energy in a national energy mix, for realising universal access to energy and for improving energy efficiency in view of achieving absolute decoupling of resource use from economic growth, recognising the principle of CBDR.
- International reforms of the financial and economic systems to reflect the principles underlying sustainable development. This should include the effective taxation of corporations, the establishment of a tax on financial transactions, stronger regulations, increased transparency and systematic evaluation of human rights and environmental impacts of the financial and economic sectors' activities. Also, the reforms of the Bretton Woods institutions' and the WTO's governance structures towards improved representativity, accountability and considerations for SD as a multidimensional concept. Particular attention should be given to policy coherence for sustainable development in international relations with complaints and redress mechanisms in case of violation.
- An emphasis being given to identifying post growth models of development.

6. Increasing equity, empowering people and investing in environmentally friendly economic activities are key to sustainable development

The 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development must recognise that to promote equity priority must be given to the most disadvantaged segments of the world's population. This can only be achieved if the wealthiest countries drastically reduce the impact of their own economies on the sustainability of the ecosystem while helping developing countries achieve a sustainable path to development. In different sectors this requires:

Food security

- The prioritisation by governments of investment in ecological approaches to agriculture as the best strategy to ensure food and nutritious security in developing countries.
- Recognising and emphasising the particular role of women as regard to food and nutritious security. Governments should commit to policy reforms that ensure land rights, and access to water and productive resources for farmers, in particular women.
- Addressing the problem of food price volatility and the impact of biofuels cultivation on the environment and human rights. The actual contribution of bio-fuels to sustainability needs to be critically reviewed, as do practices used for its production.
- Acknowledging the consequences of climate change on food production and food security as well as the need to increase people's resilience to climate change.
- Optimizing the potential of social protection and safety nets and focusing on disaster risk reduction for food and nutrition security in agriculture.
- Recognising the need to address food waste as being crucial to ensure food security and as a means for reducing climate change as it could reduce pressure on food production. Policies that improve harvesting techniques, storage and processing in developing countries must be prioritized.

Energy

- Recognition by governments of the need to provide access to renewable energy through small scale decentralized energy projects as the best way to fight poverty and ensure sustainable development. Commitments to prioritize this approach in terms of strategies and financing need to be made by governments at Rio2012.
- Governments to commit to the goal of providing universal access to affordable, reliable and sustainable energy by 2020; increasing resource efficiency so as 1/3 of the projected energy use for 2030 will be covered through energy efficiency by 2030; ensuring the share of renewable energy accounts for 40% of the global energy mix by 2030.

The right to Social protection for the most vulnerable

- A commitment to establish social protection floors to all members of society, including people employed in the informal sector, the unemployed, as well as indigenous and marginalised people.
- Social protection strategies oriented towards women as a means of empowerment, and in order to improve women's lives, and those of their children, as well as to enhance their contributions to sustainable development, , and to their local community as a whole.

The key role of women for sustainable development

- The prioritisation by governments to enabling and encouraging women's participation in the social, economic and political life of their country. This includes using Gender Responsive Budgeting (GRB) mechanisms, repealing discriminatory laws against women, ensuring that measures to fight gender based violence are in place and advancing the representativeness of women in political bodies.
- Governments to commit to ensuring universal access to reproductive health recognising that the fulfilment of reproductive rights is a key contributor to reducing population growth.

7. The future global institutional and action framework must ensure effective and accountable implementation

The 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development should strengthen the governance and accountability mechanisms to ensure effective compliance of commitments to achieve sustainable development. This requires:

- Adopting legally binding commitments that set specific targets for phasing out fossil fuel subsidies, increasing the share of renewable sources of energy in the energy mix or providing social protection floors (see recommendations 6.)

Sustainable Development Council

- Establishing a UN Council for Sustainable Development that has the mandate to follow the processes relating to the normative aspects and follow up mechanisms for the implementation of SD (devising of SDGs, setting up of alternative indicators to GDP, development of an international green economy roadmap or the establishment of an information sharing platform). These should be led by the Member States.

Ombudsperson for future generations

- Establishing an ombudsperson for future generations at the international and national level.

SDGs

- Agreeing to devise SDGs by 2015 which take account of the different nature of sustainability and well being. Sustainability should be measured against environmental and ecological limits while increase in well being should be assessed according to human rights fulfilment and equity criteria.

- The process through which the goals will be designed must be inclusive. Besides governments, a wide range of stakeholders (CSOs, local authorities, indigenous people, the private sector etc) as well as scientists and experts coming from different spheres (development, environment, economics, finance, trade etc) must participate in the shaping of the goals.
- The SDGs should not divert the international community from the achievement of the MDGs by 2015. The SDGs should complement and support the attainment of the MDGs. Successes and weaknesses of the MDGs should be drawn upon in this regard.
- The SDGs should be based on a certain number of principles such as equity, the precautionary and the polluter pays principle. They should be universally applicable but allowing for the principle of CBDR.

Roadmap

- Green economy roadmaps based on an understanding and definition of the concept of green economy that is clearly defined where the multi dimensional concept of SD should be set out (reference to recommendation 5.).
- With provisions for the process of developing roadmaps at national and international level to be transparent, inclusive and democratic should be made at Rio2012.
- Clear recognition, according to the principle of CBDR, that the roadmaps to be drawn up by developed countries should show great ambition as regard to the improvement of the three dimensions of SD with a particular attention to addressing unsustainable production and consumption patterns and as regard to provide assistance to developing countries should be made at Rio2012.
- Commitment to apply the principle of coherence for SD when developing roadmaps and establish impact assessment mechanisms should be agreed at rio2012.
- An international roadmap should set clear actions and steps towards the provision of the means of implementation for SD to developing countries.

Beyond GDP

- Governments acknowledging that without the right set of indicators the sustainability of a particular model of development cannot be evaluated and therefore achieved. The well being of a population and the sustainability/unsustainability of a country's governance and economic, environmental and social policies must be fully reflected in a new alternative model, guided by a set of binding goals and indicators. This should build on already existing initiatives such as the Human Development Index, the Better life Index, the Stiglitz commission's proposals or the International System for integrated Environmental and Economic Accounting (SEEA), amongst others.

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