

Press Release

For immediate release

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EU must re-commit to Rio Principals

Civil society organisations from around the world are calling on the EU to unreservedly re-commit, in both letter and spirit, to the Rio principles adopted 20 years ago. EU Environment Ministers, who meet in Luxembourg on Monday 11 June, are being urged to demonstrate that EU policies and practices pursued within and outside the EU will be consistent with the principles of sustainable development.

With Rio+20 summit just days away the outcome is in jeopardy as differences on fundamental issues remain. “It is all too evident that safeguarding national economies is being prioritised over global sustainability in positioning towards the outcome” said Roberto Bissio, Coordinator of Social Watch. “But contentious competition over the Earth’s limited resources cannot lead to sustainable development” he continued.

The EU has promoted itself as a global leader in the negotiations, on the basis of its “green” credentials and the principles and values on which it is founded. “The EU’s principles resonate well around the world but there is considerable concern over their application” stated Ziad Abdel Samed, Director of the Arab NGO Network for Development. “All too often the EU’s actions are not consistent with the principles it promotes. This undermines its claim as a credible global leader. For the EU to be consistent with the principals and values that it espouses it must demonstrate its commitment to fundamental changes in its policy framework based on the principles adopted in Rio 20 years ago, including the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.”

The EU has been promoting the concept of the Green Economy as the path towards sustainability. “The EU’s proposals for the green economy do not

address the root causes of the crisis, nor fundamentally tackle inequalities and power imbalances. Nor would they sufficiently regulate corporate sector activities” stated Simon Stocker, Director of Eurostep. “The radical changes necessary must be reflected in reforms to national economies. There are many examples of good practices implemented at the local level and these must increasingly be promoted and drawn upon as sound solutions for sustainability.”

The meeting of the EU Environment Council is taking place just before the final negotiations on the outcome of the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) opens in Rio de Janeiro.

The conference will bring together some 110 world leaders, and is seen as a crucial moment in defining a global strategy to agree global strategies for achieving sustainable development. If, as scientific assessments indicate, we are already consuming significantly more environmental resources than our planet can sustainably replenish and climate change effects keep advancing, then failure at Rio to address our mounting levels of ecological debt can only diminish the already declining scope to achieve sustainable solutions.

The letter from the six civil society networks can be found at http://www.eurostep.org/wcm/dmdocuments/LET_120608_EUenvmin_Rio20.pdf

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Social Watch is an international network of citizens’ organizations in the struggle to eradicate poverty and the causes of poverty, to end all forms of discrimination and racism, to ensure an equitable distribution of wealth and the realization of human rights. We are committed to peace, social, economic, environment and gender justice, and we emphasize the right of all people not to be poor. It holds governments, the UN system and international organizations accountable for the fulfilment of national, regional and international commitments to eradicate poverty. Social Watch seeks to achieve its objectives through a comprehensive strategy of advocacy, awareness-building, monitoring, organizational development and networking. Social Watch promotes people-centred sustainable development.

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. *Eurostep* 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. *Eurostep* members believe that the eradication of injustice and poverty and a more equitable distribution of resources are essential to achieve peace and stability in the world. These objectives can be achieved through concerted action and political will, particularly by governments, but also by civil society and corporate sector actors in so-called developed and developing countries.

The **Arab NGO Network for Development (ANND)** is a regional network, working in 11 Arab countries with 8 national networks (with an extended membership of 200 CSOs from different backgrounds) and 30 NGO members. ANND was established in 1997 and its headquarters is located in Beirut, Lebanon since 2000. ANND aims at strengthening the role of civil society, enhancing the values of democracy, respect of human rights and sustainable development in the region. ANND advocates for more sound and effective socio-economic reforms in the region, which integrate the concepts of sustainable development, gender justice, and the rights-based approach.

The **Third World Network (TWN)** is an independent non-profit international network of organisations and individuals involved in issues relating to development, developing countries and North-South affairs. TWN was formed to strengthen cooperation among development and environment groups in the South. Its mission is to bring about a greater articulation of the needs and rights of peoples in the South, a fair distribution of world resources, and forms of development which are ecologically sustainable and fulfill human needs. TWN's objectives are to deepen the understanding of the development dilemmas and challenges facing developing countries and to contribute to policy changes in pursuit of just, equitable and ecologically sustainable development.

ALOP (Asociación Latinoamericana de Organizaciones de Promoción) is an association of non-governmental development organisations from 20 countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. Established in 1979, ALOP is one of the most long-lasting efforts of integration of NGDOs in the region. Within its objectives, ALOP aims at building and facilitating meeting and exchange spaces for its members in the perspective of mutual learning in order to elaborate proposals for global, local and sectorial development and work towards establishing proactive relations with all actors on the Latin-American (LA) and Caribbean development scenario. Taking into account the experience and expertise of its members, ALOP aims to enhance the effectiveness of its members in promoting development processes, build up the capacity for dialogue and articulation of civil society organisations in the region and at regional and international fora.

LDC Watch is a global alliance of national, regional and international civil society organisations (CSOs), networks and movements based in the Least Developed Countries and supported by civil society from development partner countries. LDC Watch acts as a coordinating body for LDC civil society to advocate, lobby, campaign and network for the realisation of the Istanbul Programme of Action (IPoA) as well as other Internationally Agreed Development Goals (IADGs). LDC Watch is committed to facilitating and supporting people's initiatives and struggles against poverty, hunger, social, economic, political and ecological injustices through advocacy, campaigns and strategic partnership with the social movements, UN agencies, LDC governments and other members of the international community, for pro-poor policies together with their implementation in the LDCs.