



EESC conference

Go sustainable, be responsible! European civil society on the road to Rio+20

7/8 February 2012

Conference message

During the conference *Go sustainable, be responsible! European civil society on the road to Rio+20* organised by the European Economic and Social Committee on 7-8 February 2012 in Brussels, we, representatives of European organised civil society, adopted the following message. We:

1. demand that, at the Rio+20 UN Conference, **world leaders commit to a concrete action plan leading to** sustainable development and poverty eradication within the limitations of the planet. Promoting a green economy must be part of an overarching sustainable development strategy, striking a balance between social, ecological and economic aspects while achieving distributional and intergenerational equity.
2. stress that **eradicating poverty and secure access to enough food, clean water and sustainable energy for all** must be a top priority on the Rio+20 agenda. We point out that the promotion of environmentally sound local agriculture in developing countries plays a crucial role in fighting poverty and improving food security, and is a driving force for the development of economically prosperous rural areas. We stress the need to ensure equal political, economic and social rights for women.
3. call on political leaders to deliver on their commitment to meet the **Millennium Development Goals** and to adopt additional measures ensuring the necessary effective financing. In particular, we urge developed countries to effectively implement their commitment to allocate at least 0.7% of their gross national income to development aid.
4. urge European negotiators to place much greater emphasis on the **social dimension** of sustainable development than envisaged in the zero draft. Increasing social and wealth inequalities within and between countries requires urgent action, since they are hindering efforts to achieve sustainable development and distributional equity. Moreover, a just transition must guarantee decent work and high-quality jobs for the workforce. We call for the ratification and application of ILO Core Labour Standards and we fully support the ILO Social Protection Floor Initiative.
5. call on political leaders at Rio to commit to a **green economy roadmap** with clear goals and monitoring mechanisms, ensuring an economically efficient, socially just and environmentally sound transition to sustainable societies. We stress that the transition process must be based on continuous engagement with civil society, including social dialogue.
6. urge **European countries and other developed countries** to commit in Rio to substantially **reducing their consumption of the earth's limited natural resources**. We call on European leaders to implement agreed EU targets, and to prepare themselves for more ambitious action. We encourage emerging countries to use natural resources more efficiently.

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7. call for effective measures to **phase out unsustainable consumption and production patterns**, using a broad range of policy instruments, including regulatory measures, fiscal policy tools, green and social public procurement, the phasing-out of environmentally harmful subsidies, research on eco-innovation, the internalisation of environmental costs and other market-based incentives, while at the same time promoting sustainable life-styles and the active involvement of consumers in the transition. We call for the adoption of a 10-year work programme on sustainable consumption and production in Rio.
 8. appreciate that the zero draft recognises the **limitations of GDP** as a means of measuring well-being and call for the involvement of civil society in the urgent development of complementary indicators.
 9. **welcome** the initiative to establish by 2015 a set of global **Sustainable Development Goals**, taking a balanced approach to all three dimensions of sustainable development. We call for an inclusive process starting in Rio linking MDGs with comprehensive SDGs and establishing a strategy and sustainable development indicators with clear mechanisms for accountability.
 10. advocate a new global deal in Rio to ensure the necessary **investments in the greening of the economy**.
 11. acknowledge the key role and the **responsibility of the private sector** in achieving a transition to sustainable development and stress that greening the economy is an opportunity for business. We encourage business and industry to take that opportunity, and call on political leaders to draw up **clear, stable and predictable green economy policy frameworks** to give business the confidence, the regulatory framework and the incentives for the investments needed.
 12. call for the creation of a new **Council for Sustainable Development**, replacing the Commission for Sustainable Development, and for the **creation of a new UN agency for the environment** based on UNEP. Both of these bodies should provide for effective involvement of civil society, as represented by the Major Groups.
 13. welcome the proposal to establish an **ombudsman for future generations**.
 14. urge political leaders to agree at the Rio+20 conference on additional **measures to improve effective civil society involvement** and achieve empowerment at global, national and local level in the transition to sustainable societies. We call for the establishment of legal and institutional frameworks ensuring public access to information, dialogue, democratic participation and scrutiny. We advocate promoting multi-stakeholder for such as Economic and Social Committees and National Sustainability Councils as models to stimulate civil society debate. We call for more awareness-raising campaigns and education programmes on sustainable development.
 15. encourage civil society all over the world to continue pushing for a conference outcome capable of meeting the challenges we are facing. **Civil society has to take global responsibility!**
 16. welcome the **zero draft** document issued by the UN Rio+20 Conference Bureau as a good starting point for subsequent negotiations. However, we feel that the zero draft still falls far short of these challenges.
 17. expect European heads of government to take responsibility and engage in the Rio+20 conference. We call on EU negotiators to work for a more ambitious document as regards targets, timing, financing, legal commitment and follow-up, and stress the need to review and revitalise the overarching EU Sustainable Development Strategy following the Rio+20 conference.
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