

THIRD INTERNATIONAL EXPERT MEETING ON SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

Stockholm, Sweden (26 – 29 June 2007)

Comments on Background Paper 1 from the NGO Community

We, the NGOs¹, have 6 summary recommendations to the Steering Committee for integrating into the 2nd draft version of the Key Elements of a Proposed 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production (draft Background Paper 1 prepared by UN DESA and UNEP, 26-29 June 2007):

1. **Implement Agenda 21's** objectives and commitments on sustainable production and consumption, particularly under chapter 4, as well as the UN Guidelines for Consumer Protection (see 1A)
2. Identify targets, timetables and strategies needed to **reverse worsening social and ecological trends before 2021** (see 2F)
3. Clarify the meaning, scope of and timelines for the **“Framework of Programmes”** (see 2B and 2C)
4. Strengthen the meaningful **participation (and diversity) of NGOs** in the Marrakech process (see 2A)
5. Develop a strong multi-stakeholder **monitoring and evaluation** component into the Marrakech process (see 2D)
6. Create **space for substantive dialogue** to frame the context for the Marrakech process (e.g., on equity, reduction / efficiency...) (see 2E)

The full set of recommendations is below. NGO comments have been developed on specific sections, and have made more general comments to be taken into account as the next version is produced.

The NGO community welcomes Background Paper 1 (BP1), which sketches out the first policies that a Framework of Programmes could support. Embracing its status as a **living document** to be read with Background Papers 2 and 3, the NGO community looks forward to working with UN DESA, UNEP and other stakeholders to strengthen the Framework in the coming years.

¹ These recommendations were prepared in the lead-up to the 3rd International Expert Meeting on Sustainable Consumption and Production. They have been refined during the NGO Forum on 26 June, 2006, in Stockholm, as well as through an online forum open to NGOs until Aug. 16, 2007. They reflect the views of many of the NGOs present at this expert meeting.

1. Comments on Specific Sections of Background Paper 1

1A) Comments on Section 3.1: Develop, Implement and Monitor National Programmes or Action Plans on SCP

We welcome that the **Framework calls for National Programmes or Action Plans on SCP**. We recognize that a big challenge is to find effective ways of getting national governments seriously interested and engaged in promoting SCP patterns, and seeing the need for having a “framework of programmes” available to them. NGOs want to work with the Marrakech Process in their own countries and regions to raise the profile of SCP and the Framework of Programmes.

NGOs recommend that the following issues be taken into account by governments and the UN as they further develop the Framework and guidelines for National Programmes or Action Plans on SCP:

- The Framework of Programmes build capacity and political will to implement the original Agenda 21 objectives and principles. The language in the draft Framework needs to be actively **compared (and rooted in, where appropriate) the language in Agenda 21**, which in most cases is more action-oriented, detailed and progressive – and has already been agreed to. The draft also needs to recall other international agreements including, e.g., the international work programme at **CSD 7** in 1999 which includes time-bound commitments from countries on SCP. There has been a tremendous amount of research and work already done on these issues that needs to be drawn on given the urgency of the issue. A number of NGOs have an institutional memory of these agreements and were active in their development: they need to be seen as resources in development of the Framework.
- The **voluntary target**, which currently reads: “XX% of countries develop and implement SCP programmes or action plans by 2021.” We expect it to be **100%**, referring to the—by that time—29-year-old commitment by Heads of State under Agenda 21.

Action plans are the desirable outcome of the Marrakech Process, but must be accompanied by a “domestic policy **framework**” (Agenda 21, 4.17b) to ensure that these plans are coherent with other government policies and sustainability orientations. Related, these strategies should be led by the Ministries of Finance, Ministries of Education, and other relevant partners including NGOs; if national and regional processes are to be lead by the Environment Ministries, they are very likely to end up in written plans or policies that will not be implemented. When discussing how to decouple or delink economic growth from environmental degradation, we have to start by acknowledging that the Ministries of Economy and Environment are clearly de-linked from one another. Environment Ministries have proven to be among the weakest state organizations, and the policies they formulate clash with other (unsustainable) policies lead by other state institutions that prove to be more powerful. Only by including the relevant state institutions will we be able to overcome the struggle between explicit and implicit policies and live up to the challenge of reversing current trends.

1B) Comments on Section 3.3: Responsible Value Chains – Sustainable Products / Services

The UN Secretariat should revise the following wording:

- The goal should be revised to read: “To **eliminate unsustainable** products and services as well as increase the market supply of sustainable ones...”
- Policies and actions point x should be revised to read: “Stimulate the demand for sustainable products and services and **discourage demand for unsustainable ones...**”

1C) Comments on Section 3.4: Integrated Resource and Waste Management to Promote Material Efficiency

The UN Secretariat should revise the following:

- The goal should be revised to read: “through **policies to reduce consumption** and prevent waste (including integrated waste management)...”
- Under possible policies and actions, add “Promote **fiscal reform**, including tax shifting.”

1D) Comments on Section 3.5: Promotion of Sustainable Lifestyles through Education, Communication and Innovation

NGOs propose the following:

- In “Goal”, the UN Secretariat should revise the wording to read: “by promoting resource efficiency **as well as a reduction in resource use...**”
- To support the possible policy / action on “collectively defining new social norms,” the Taskforce on Sustainable Lifestyles should explore the use and potential of **future scenarios** for happy, fulfilling and ecologically sustainable lives and livelihoods that will serve as inspiration and guidance.

2. General Comments

2A) Role of NGOs Strengthened in the Marrakech Process

NGOs appreciate the space provided at this 3rd International Expert Meeting for an NGO Forum, and are happy to hear that NGO fora are now an integral part of the International Expert Meetings. In order to ensure that NGOs are equal partners in these meetings and throughout the process, NGO call on the **Steering Committee** to:

- Support a formal **NGO forum** that would be held and supported by the United Nations sometime before the 4th International Expert Meeting;
- Include NGO representative(s) as members of the **Steering Committee** for the 4th International Expert Meeting and subsequent ones, and to ensure that funding is available to help defray costs associated with this activity;
- Support NGO representatives in order to play a meaningful role in the **Task Forces** (for example, identify and address constraints to their inclusion, and provide operational guidelines for new and existing Task Forces – also see 2D);
- Work closely with the NGOs involved in the process to **identify additional NGOs** that could be invited to participate to play an active role in the Marrakech Process, to ensure wider representation among the various NGO communities, and to use them as vectors to promote sustainable production and consumption at their level.

NGOs look forward to helping the UN redraft the Framework of Programmes, and keep contributing in a positive and constructive way (such as through this very paper) to the Marrakech Process.

2B) Need for a Short Overview of the Framework and Process for CSD

BP1 sets out the elements for governments to consider as they develop national SCP action plans and strategies. Background Papers 2 and 3 set out some of the mechanisms of the Marrakech Process as well as the key issues in SCP. However, **the current draft does not identify the actual institutional framework or specific programmes.** To help contribute to the Marrakech Process' success, NGOs recommend that:

- The Steering Group work to develop a clear definition for the “Framework of Programmes” and a conceptual map of how the Framework of Programmes links to implementation by governments and major actors (e.g., does Marrakech play a capacity-building function?). Specifically, this would include the following:
 - Identifying how the Framework will support national and regional initiatives shifting production and consumption patterns in the 10 years following 2011;
 - Identifying the international bodies that will be responsible for administering programmes in support of national and regional initiatives;
 - Proposing a list of specific programmes to support national and regional initiatives; and
 - Developing a strong multi-stakeholder monitoring and evaluation component into the Marrakech Process, to track the 10-Year Framework of Programmes as well as the impact of resulting national and regional initiatives.
- The UN Secretariat prepares a brief to governments, Major Groups and other interested parties, outlining the process for CSD 2010 / 2011. In particular, clarification is sought on what will be presented and what the process is for adoption (e.g., will it be a negotiated text?).

2C) Rationale for Elements to be Included in the Framework

BP1 outlines potential voluntary targets, possible policies and actions and means of implementation for a set of topics. This list of topics is based on priorities identified during the regional and other consultations but still somewhat arbitrary. As such, NGOs recommend that:

- The UN Secretariat sets out a clear rationale for its selection of these elements, which do not include some of the key leverage points for SCP, e.g., need for ecological / fiscal reform.
- The UN Secretariat considers the following topics for inclusion, either as separate elements or within existing elements: ecological fiscal reform, agriculture, indicators.

To complement this point, the NGO community has prepared a paper entitled, “**Context to the 10-Year Framework: An NGO perspective,**” which presents a fuller view of the NGO vision for SCP. They include guiding principles, concepts and leverage points related to SCP. The paper should be taken into account by UNEP / UNDESA as they work with Major Groups and governments to define the Framework of Programmes for the Marrakech Process.

2D) Clarify Role of NGOs in Task Forces and Address Gap in Monitoring and Evaluation

NGOs welcome the fact that “the Task Forces are multi-stakeholder bodies...which in all cases is **open to any governments or other institutions...**” However, NGOs do not have the impression yet of being equal partners in all of the Task Forces. As a first step, NGOs encourage the UN to advise Task Force convenors to invite NGOs as members. NGOs will also approach Task Forces where their expertise can help advance the specific issue agendas. The means by which they can join need to be more clearly established. Furthermore, there need to be allowances made for constraints (e.g., support to attend meetings) to their inclusion.

On topic areas, gaps have been identified in BP3. NGOs have the following recommendations:

- NGOs echo the importance of working on **urban dimension of SCP** and urge the UN to bridge its work through UN Habitat with that of the Marrakech Process so that this important leverage point is understood and integrated into the Framework.
- As mentioned in the “Cooperation at the International Level” section of BP1, strong monitoring and evaluation component needs to be integrated into the Marrakech Process. NGOs invite governments to take leadership and establish a strong partnership or initiative on **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E)**.

NGOs identify **two main responsibilities** for this multi-stakeholder initiative. First, the group needs to develop an **M&E strategy (with indicators) for the Framework development process as well as implementation of the Framework**. On implementation, international support to capacity-building to enable M&E of SCP programmes at national and regional levels is welcome (see BP1, p. 28). Part of their job would also be to assess the types of partnerships other task forces should engage in and how to avoid duplication of effort across the UN and Major Groups. In parallel, the group would take the lead on a **review of the National SCP Action Plans** that have been developed to date. As noted, national programmes or action plans to achieve Agenda 21 objectives and commitments were agreed to in 1992. It would present a structured overview of key objectives, commitments and proposed activities detailed in Agenda 21, particularly Chapter 4 and related sections, focusing on promoting a shift in production and consumption patterns. In seeking to understand why these were rarely developed, a review should be carried out and presented to the next International Expert Meeting in 2009. The review should reflect on efforts, success and failures. It would note the primary concerns and barriers (political, economic, cultural, etc.) to (1) developing domestic policy frameworks to encourage the shift in production and consumption patterns, and (2) developing and instituting action plans to implement those policies.

2E) Encourage <u>Substantive Dialogue</u> within the Marrakech Process
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The Marrakech Task Forces focus on the “design of policy tools and implementation mechanisms for the 10 YFP.” To complement the work of these task forces, NGOs see the need for a mechanism that facilitates substantive dialogue under Marrakech. What is missing is an international space for the various stakeholders to discuss underlying issues that form the basis for action. This dialogue would help define the broader objectives of an SCP framework to achieve wellbeing of all people on Earth, with clear goals that ensures poverty alleviation, gender equity, appropriate human living standards, and equitable consumption and production opportunities. **Issues for discussion** could include: the link between SCP and poverty reduction (including equity concerns), “corporate accountability” (in contrast to corporate responsibility), the different contributions of voluntary vs. regulatory approaches in the transition to SCP, well-being (and how to move towards a culture of “sufficiency”), indicators, going beyond improving existing technologies to think about system-wide innovations, motivators of behaviour change, etc. A practical issue that cuts across many of the proposed Framework elements is that of jobs and employment. So long as there is not a meaningful and intelligent discussion around the issue of employment and how a smooth transition can be made to a sustainable economy, there will be massive resistance for any type of change emanating from important sectors of society. This dialogue should also explore the recommendation from the European Regional meeting on SCP (Ostende, Belgium, November 2005) calling for “targets to promote absolute decoupling [of economic growth from environmental pressures].” All of these topics would draw on and complement research initiatives.

2F) More Ambitious Implementation is Necessary Before 2021

The main goal of the Marrakech Process must focus on reversing trends rather than slowing them down. The process places excessive emphasis on efficiency in production, and insufficient attention is dedicated to change in consumption patterns, which requires systemic change.

Overarching all of its other comments, NGOs stress the urgency of all major actors – **especially government** – in moving forward with SCP, and are frustrated with the 2021 timeline that is being proposed for the Framework. We are at a point in history where the biophysical reality has to guide our action agenda, rather than the UN calendar. From the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment to the IPCC report, we are overshooting the carrying capacity of the planet with the result of global collapse in fisheries, climate, freshwater scarcity, the spread of disease, etc. SCP is an urgent priority if these trend lines are to be reversed. To start discussion on how to manage this implementation gap, NGOs propose that:

- The opening section of BP1 on “Vision of SCP in the Year 2021” is developed into a set of scenarios for what policy decisions and actions need to be taken between now and then. It should set out a baseline of key ecological and human well-being indicators as well as projected trend lines to show the need for urgent forward movement. It needs to identify targets, timetables and strategies needed to reverse worsening social and ecological trends by 2021.
- Existing commitments to core SCP strategies are recalled in this opening section, particularly those made by 191 governments in 1992 in Agenda 21 to “develop a domestic policy framework that will encourage a shift to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption” (4.17 [b]).

Most importantly, **developing the Framework must not be seen as an excuse for waiting until 2021** for implementation by governments and other major groups. To this day, 15 years have passed since the Agenda 21 pledge was made, and there is no excuse for delaying action on this crucial point. We recognize that countries need support by the UN to overcome the challenge of developing national SCP strategies and action plans, and although the goal of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes that is currently being discussed is to do just that, the fact that this Framework is not yet available should not be used as an excuse to postpone action further. Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation—as well as scores of other academic and other resources—offer more than enough guidance for countries to take the lead on drafting, developing and implementing a national SCP strategy on their own.

There is another practical concern with the 2021 date: **CSD does not have an official mandate beyond 2017.**