

One Earth Initiative Society:

**Input into the UNCSD 2012
compilation document**

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One Earth Initiative Society

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A. What are the expectations for the outcome of Rio+20, and what are the concrete proposals in this regard, including views on a possible structure of the Outcome document?

In terms of **outcomes of Rio+20**, the One Earth Initiative Society expects to see:

- Renewed political commitment at the highest political level to move to sustainable development and to adopt sustainable consumption and production patterns.
- A bold vision of “a future we want” that is attractive, inspiring and a source of hope for humanity.
- An Outcome document that includes, or is accompanied by, a green economy roadmap.
- A Ten-Year Framework of Programmes in support of regional and national SCP initiatives.
- A new, enhanced, comprehensive and more inclusive process for the UN to engage with civil society that addresses the current limitations, weaknesses and exclusionary nature of the 9 Major Group system.

Regarding a possible structure of the **Outcome document**, we suggest that it be short, and should include the following key elements:

- An introduction that recognizes the gravity of the situation faced by humanity and the urgent need for a ‘great transition’ to sustainability.
- A set of strong values and guiding principles drawn from, for example, the Earth Charter, and that include:
 - The need for reciprocity, cooperation and sharing;
 - The need to achieve absolute reductions in material and energy throughput at the global scale;
 - Recognition that at the global scale, more growth on a finite planet already in a state of ecological overshoot is anathema to sustainable development.
 - Embracing sufficiency as an organizing principle;
 - A reemphasis on Principle #10 of the Rio Declaration on access to information, transparency, public participation and access to justice; and
 - An approach to global sustainability built around ‘contraction and convergence’ (decreased per-capita Ecological Footprints in the rich, industrialized countries, and higher rates of consumption in the low-income countries).
- Sustainable development goals, similar to the Millennium Development Goals, with global targets and timetables.
- A non-negotiated appendix of countries’ own commitments to sustainable development and provisions for monitoring, compliance and reporting.

B. What are the comments, if any, on existing proposals: e.g., a green economy roadmap, framework for action, sustainable development goals, a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development, or others?

- A **green economy roadmap** needs to include specific goals and a timeframe with short-, medium- and long-term targets to help guide action.
- It also needs to include indicators and a mechanism for monitoring and reporting.
- It needs to be clear on the barriers that are preventing the world from moving to sustainability despite the warnings of science that this is more urgent than ever (see C., below, for examples).
- It needs to feature a list of policy instruments that can guide countries' options on affecting change around production and consumption systems (see below, for examples).
- Countries should be encouraged to 'think out of the box' and prototype new ways of organizing their economy and of carrying out projects that contribute to sustainable patterns of consumption and production.
- Listed below are potential **policy instruments** to be considered by UN-member States and other stakeholders; they are organized in order of decreasing coerciveness, from the 'hard' policy instruments that include laws and regulations as well as 'carrots and sticks' (rewards/penalties), to 'soft' policy instruments, which include voluntary, non-binding recommendations and guidelines, education (formal and informal), information sharing, and organizational structure:
 - **Regulatory instruments** – Norms and standards, bans, caps and emission limits, building codes, etc.
 - **Economic instruments** – Fiscal, or market-based instruments (subsidies, taxes, user fees, green public procurement, bonus systems, emissions trading, etc.), investments in infrastructure that support sustainable consumption and production
 - **Participatory instruments** – Urban planning, public dialogues, policy discussions, participatory budgets, etc.
 - **Voluntary instruments** – Unilateral commitments, negotiated agreements, voluntary setting of targets, voluntary certification schemes, etc.
 - **Informational instruments** – Ecolabels, information centres, websites, demonstration projects, etc.
 - **Educational instruments** – Training, integration of whole-systems thinking in formal and informal education, research, etc.

- **Organizational/institutional arrangements** – Cooperation schemes, public-private partnerships, agreements between different levels of government, etc.

C. What are the views on implementation and on how to close the implementation gap, which relevant actors are envisaged as being involved (Governments, specific Major Groups, UN system, IFIs, etc.)?

- The **conventional, incremental-change approach** to sustainability is failing to make sufficient progress in reversing the worsening social and ecological trends, and new models, mindsets and metrics are required to guide action for systemic and transformative change.
- **Systems thinking** needs to form the basis of action plans, roadmaps and frameworks for action to avoid fragmented thought, jumping to conclusions, short-sighted decision making and the “problem-solving treadmill”, which have hampered significant progress towards sustainable development at the global scale thus far.
- There needs to be a recognition of the **barriers that prevent the urgent transition to a socially just and ecologically sustainable world**; these include:
 - Fragmentation of sustainability initiatives at all scales
 - Inertia in the system (including of habits as well as social and cultural norms; in infrastructure and technologies; etc.)
 - Paralysis in front of tremendous complexity
 - Need for political leadership
 - Skewed markets resulting from misplaced subsidies, the externalization of costs , short-term profit seeking, a non-level playing field and entrenched interests
 - Misunderstandings around the seriousness of issues
 - Unpopularity of proposed measures and policy solutions
 - Influence of powerful interest lobbies
 - Inability to effectively apply a systems perspective to problem solving
 - Too much emphasis on efficiency as a means to reduce material and energy throughput when historically, lower prices brought about by gains in technology and efficiency have led to overall increases and bigger footprints when an overall cap on resource use is not established
- Implementation needs to focus on being **scientifically relevant** (i.e. leading to absolute reductions in resource use and negative ecological impacts at the global scale; reigning in climate change; etc.).
- Examples of **specific, high-leverage policies** to be implemented for a green economy:
 - Instituting a socially fair carbon tax or equitable cap-and-trade system

- Phasing out of subsidies and investments for unsustainable, inhumane systems
 - Freeing up the length of the working day, week and year to reflect a work-life balance that promotes well-being
 - Reforming our banking system in support of a larger diversity of community-based savings, lending and investment
 - Putting a stop to urban sprawl through increased densification in existing urban centres
 - Discouraging car use, especially in urban areas, and investing heavily in efficient and comfortable public transportation options and self-propelled infrastructure (i.e. car-free spaces)
 - Retrofitting existing buildings to a minimum of PassivHaus norms
 - Implementing choice editing to remove unsustainable options from the market place by industry and government
 - Maximizing public purchases through green and fair-trade procurement
 - Reforming the World Trade Organization so that it serves to promote fair trade
- **Diverse actors have specific roles**, tools and approaches that they bring to bear on addressing the consumption and production system. The World Business Council developed a useful characterization of these different roles:

Role of governments and regulators

- International agreements
- National policies, laws and regulations
- Fiscal structures and incentives
- Guidance for businesses and consumers
- Monitoring
- Enforcement

Role of businesses

- Economic development
- Legal compliance
- Ethical practices
- Sustainable sourcing, production and distribution
- Eco-efficiency and waste reduction
- Consumer choice editing
- Consumer choice influencing
- Recycling
- Innovation
- Example-setting

Role of civil society (NGOs)

- Independent assessment
- High profile public campaigns

- Critique or endorsement
- Thought leadership
- Choice influencing

Role of consumers

- Purchasing decisions
- Lifestyle choices
- Political support
- Peer-to-peer influencing

- No single actor can achieve broad, systemic change alone, and cooperation and dialogue is mutually beneficial and needs to be encouraged.

D. What specific cooperation mechanisms, partnership arrangements or other implementation tools are envisaged and what is the relevant time frame for the proposed decisions to be reached and actions to be implemented?

- Multistakeholder cooperation could be organized around a **10-Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP)** in support of regional and national initiatives on sustainable consumption and production. Although the ideas for this framework were successfully negotiated and agreed at the 19th Session of CSD, they have yet to be implemented. The UN Conference on Sustainable Development has a timely opportunity to adopt this 10YFP as one of the positive constructive institutional outcomes for moving the sustainable development agenda forward.
- Rio+20 should open a new discussion track on **improving the model, process and effective engagement of civil society** in sustainable development policymaking and decisions. The Outcome document can include commitment to review current and new models of civil society participation and to design a new, more inclusive and effective participation structure for civil society organizations (CSOs) to be meaningfully engaged in the current and future sustainable development governance framework and institutional structures, including the United Nations.