

RIO+20

UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting (Geneva, 1-2 December 2011)

Item 5: Assessment of progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges

Statement by the European Union and its Member States

Mr. Chairman, Ministers, Excellencies, distinguished delegates,

I have the to honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

I would like to refer first to the *Assessment of progress in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, with a focus on achievements in the region.*

Since the adoption of the UNGA resolution on the Rio+20 Conference, major summits and conferences related to sustainable development have enshrined Rio+20 as a benchmark and have reflected on how to contribute from different perspectives to improve sustainable development.

Some of these major summits have delivered concrete and operational results that we warmly welcome. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight some of them that in our view have delivered concrete and operational results and which are particularly relevant for sustainable development and the objectives of Rio+20 in general as well as for the UNECE context in particular:

- We are especially satisfied with the outcome of the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Biodiversity held in Nagoya in October 2010, which launched the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020.
- We welcome the decisions adopted at the last meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention on Desertification held in Korea in October 2010, which will contribute to enhance efforts towards combating desertification

- We welcome as well the Cancun Agreements reached at the 16th meeting of the Climate Change Conference of the Parties in December 2010 and the progress made on the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol.
- We welcome the fact that at CSD 19 in May this year we reached a large consensus on the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production, and we hope that we will be able to adopt it at Rio+20.
- The 5th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention on Environmental Impact Assessment in a transboundary context held in Geneva last June adopted the 3rd review of implementation, which identified a number of shortcomings to be addressed.
- The 4th session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters held in Chisinau on 29 June-1 July 2011 focused on sustainable development and adopted the Chisinau Declaration.
- We also welcome in this context the outcomes of the 7th Ministerial Conference on Environment for Europe held in Astana last September, in particular the Ministerial Declaration “Save water, grow green”, the Astana Water Action, the report “Europe’s Environment: An Assessment of Assessments”, the Second Assessment of Transboundary Rivers, Lakes and Groundwaters in the UNECE region and the document “Greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development”.
- We would also like to highlight that non-intergovernmental events such as the Bonn 2011 Conference on the Water, Energy and Food Security Nexus provide platforms for the active involvement of non-State actors and valuable inputs for Rio+20
- Finally, I would like to add that in the EU specifically we have made important progress, and the EU has adopted binding climate targets together with the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, as well as range of legislative instruments on biodiversity, waste management, water and air quality. This has encouraged the growth of EU eco-industries, which now correspond to over 2.5% of EU GDP and provide jobs to over 3.4 million people.

We would like now to refer to *Addressing new and emerging challenges*

Rio+20 should include democratic development and respect for human rights to achieve sustainable development at every level and recognize democracy, the rule of law, transparency and accountability as means of meeting social, economic and environmental challenges, as well as the importance of gender equality and the vital role that women have in achieving sustainable development. In spite of implementation efforts by governments and non-State actors in all countries, implementation barriers such as low political priority for integrated decision-making, missing or conflicting targets and measures or insufficient coordination between ministries still remain. In order to address implementation gaps, we need to promote integrated strategies, public interest, awareness and participation, good governance and coordination and cooperation mechanisms between government departments and between government, local government, civil society and the private sector. The key role of the private sector in the transition to sustainable development needs to be recognized and made full use of.

We would finally like to refer to the *new and emerging challenges, in particular for the region:*

- *Resource Efficiency and the sustainable management of resources, is of key importance for the region and the EU as reflected in the EU 20 20 strategy where resource efficiency is indeed one of the seven flagship initiatives.*
- *The energy and the low-carbon growth agenda, for which a roadmap of action has been launched and is being discussed within the EU. This is important in the context of the future energy considerations for the region.*

*Biodiversity and ecosystems are still pressing issues for the EU and the region and the EU action plan on biodiversity and on ecosystems accounting are important priorities for the EU. *

It is not a coincidence that these areas also correspond to many of the issues coming up for Rio. The management of our resources and the green economy will be key challenges for the region and the world. The potential role of the UNECE Multilateral environmental agreements in this process should be taken into account as well.

In summary, in the region we have been actively contributing to progress in the implementation of the outcomes of major summits, and we are now preparing and looking towards the next major summit Rio+20.

Thank you for your attention.