

**RIO+20**  
**UNECE Regional Preparatory Meeting (Geneva, 1-2 December 2011)**

**Item 7: The institutional framework for sustainable development**

**Statement by the Major Group of NGOs**

Thank you Chair for this opportunity to speak.

We fully endorse the comments made by Mr Jeremy Wates of EEB today and Mr Joachim Spangenberg of Friends of the Earth yesterday, and would like to make the following additions as representatives of citizens in the ECE region.

Our slow, opaque and top-down existing governance structures and decision making frameworks have proved inadequate and obsolete in meeting our rising sustainable development challenges.

Inconsistent policy formulation, flawed fiscal incentives and purely economic growth motivations remain consistently detached from our broader sustainability concerns and from the current and future lives of citizens. We maintain that the short term and silo thinking with which we persist is one of the very fundamental barriers to our lack of progress in meeting true sustainability of our societies. Monitoring, transparency, enforcement and compliance at all governance levels remain weak, unclear and undefined.

At the same time, citizens and civil society all over the world are feeling increasingly disconnected from the current process of policy making, and lacking the mechanisms to hold their governments accountable for their actions. Citizens are left without a voice and a legitimate means to defend their real concerns while being directly and negatively impacted by the rising and interconnected environmental, social and economic crises.

If we are to realise a coherent and cohesive commitment next year in Rio, towards green, fair and inclusive economies and societies, we must take practical and committed steps to improve our institutional frameworks.

First we have to identify and collectively commit to Sustainable Development Goals identified through an open, transparent and fully inclusive process which involves representatives of all Major Groups at local, regional, national and international levels.

It is also time to implement a rights-based approach that guarantees safe and sustainable access to food, water and energy, among other basic rights to all citizens, independently of their social, cultural and economic conditions.

Multi-stakeholder platforms and independent national and sub-national Councils on Sustainable Development should be in place, and sufficiently resourced, in order to monitor and empower the transition to green, inclusive and fair economies and societies in a bottom up process.

We strongly support the establishment of Ombudspersons for Future Generations who will guarantee the rights of current and future citizens and serve as an auditor at the heart of governments to deal with citizens' complaints.

Taking into consideration the experience in this region of the Aarhus Compliance Committee where citizens participate in its implementation, this model should be replicated in other Multilateral Environment Agreements.

Finally, to protect and value our collective natural, human, built and social capital, we must replace the narrow GDP indicator with a holistic set of indicators related to the Sustainable Development Goals that measure our sustainable economic welfare, our environmental, social, cultural prosperity to guide us to a green, inclusive and fair future for all.

Thank you for your attention.