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 Scientific and Technological Community

(b) How can the Major Groups effectively engage in decision-making processes at the national level?

Response from the scientific and technological community:

The science, engineering, technology and research communities have a fundamental role to play in developing systems of knowledge, defining targets, implementing solutions and monitoring progress. Therefore science advisory mechanisms should be built into all levels of decision-making, at national, regional and global scales to offer possibilities for interaction at the early stages of policy development.

Institutions and mechanisms that ensure comprehensive and independent assessments and evaluations of policies, based on the best available scientific knowledge, must be deployed. These should be available at all levels of governance, from the global to the local.

To create the base for meaningful research-based advice institutions that fund and deliver research at national and international level must promote inter- and transdisciplinary work. They should foster international research collaboration, provide support for researcher mobility and facilitate the development of smart technologies and chains that translate science into services and solutions.

The scientific and technological community welcomes initiatives to strengthen international institutional capacity that promote SD and notes that such strengthening should in particular lead to stronger research capacities of these institutions, irrespective of the detailed institutional arrangements. International organisations for research and education can play a key role in developing research based advisory functions at the global level.

(c) How can progress towards sustainable development be measured effectively?

Response from the scientific and technological community:

Several references have been made in the panel on the need for evaluations. These should include consider the dual importance of population and consumption as drivers of unsustainable development, and be responsive to changing rates of population growth and demography (urbanisation, migration, age structure).

The scientific and technological community has developed the methods and skills to measure and verify progress. Institutions and mechanisms that ensure comprehensive and independent assessments and evaluations of policies, based on the best available scientific knowledge, must be deployed. The methods include life cycle based approaches assessments that can be used to ensure that the sustainable development test is met, i.e. that social, environmental and economic impacts are identified and provisions are made for any mitigation needed.