

17/12/2007

H.E. Dr. Francis Nhema,

We, the CSD-16/17 Major Groups Organising Partners wish to thank the CSD-16 Bureau for its support to our continued involvement in the work of the Commission.

We look forward to your decisions regarding the programme of work of the Review Session and to your support for our integrated participation, which has continued to evolve since the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development.

On our end we are glad to report that, after extensive consultations within our networks, we have now finalized our official written inputs to the CSD-16 - the major groups' discussion papers, and submitted them to the secretariat. We also continue to hold monthly conference calls to coordinate our work.

Furthermore, we participated, in various degrees, in all the Regional Implementation Meetings held thus far, and plan to send representatives to the ECE RIM next January, where we will also hold a coordination meeting to develop a common strategy in dealing with the thematic cluster, and to enhance intra-sectoral collaboration towards CSD-16 /17 and beyond.

We wish to invite the Bureau to sensitize all member states about the challenges we face in finding resources to enable major groups to participate in the Commission's activities.

We have come to view the success of global UN meetings in relation to how, where and to what level representatives of civil society are involved. CSD offers the world one of the most open and participatory intergovernmental processes on sustainability issues. With a renewed mandate from the JPOI, the subsequent CSD sessions have strengthened this open and participatory process. Future successes will depend on our ability to steer a sustained civil society engagement. The fact that process work also drives programme and project work is not well understood nor fully appreciated by the donors' community, who more and more seem to be willing to primarily fund easily defined and concrete projects developed and executed in the field.

The current thematic cycle, presents more opportunities for new players to take part in the CSD processes and substantive debates, therefore requiring increased capacity to prepare and participate meaningfully.

While the main challenge would be to harness inter-sectoral and integrated approaches and engage new Ministries and actors, major group organizing partners as sustainable development implementing partners are finding that institutional memory of Rio and Johannesburg often lies within them making it more challenging to move the implementation forward.

Acting in response to the invitation by the CSD Bureau to serve as organizing partners, we are performing a number of tasks on a continuing basis between the CSD sessions as well as during these sessions.

If we expect to achieve an increased participation of major groups from developing countries and countries with economies in transition, including participation of major groups' experts as panellists in thematic discussions as well as being able to facilitate the coordination of major groups, we will need to mobilize resources so as to provide them with funding support. As the Major Groups are networks of cooperating organizations, early definition of special discussion topics and opportunities for interaction with government delegates will help us to ensure the availability of experts at the appropriate levels.

We will strive to fulfil our responsibilities as sustainable development implementing partners by staying engaged in the current implementation cycle, and we look forward to meeting with the Bureau prior and during the Review Session and to collaborating closely with the Vice-chair assigned to liaise with our nine sectors.

Yours sincerely,

The CSD-16 Major Groups Organising Partners¹

¹ International Federation of Agricultural Producers; Sustainable Development Issues Network through Northern Alliance for Sustainable Development (ANPED), Third World Network and Environment Liaison Centre International; International Trade Union Confederation; International Chamber of Commerce; International Fertilizer Industry Association (IFA); World Business Council for Sustainable Development; ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability; Tebtebba - Indigenous Peoples' International Centre for Policy Research and Education; Indigenous Environmental Network; CSD Youth Caucus through Young Water Action Team and Youth Action for Change; Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resource Management (WOCAN); African Women Leaders in Agriculture and the Environment (AWLAE); GRATIS Foundation; International Council for Science (ICSU); World Federation of Engineering Organisations, WFEO.