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Weapons of Mass Instruction

Global mechanism for science  
on sustainable development  
challenges

a multi-stakeholder  
magazine on  
climate change  
and sustainable  
development

# outreach.

27 january 2012



**RIO+20**  
United Nations  
Conference on  
Sustainable  
Development

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### About Stakeholder Forum

Stakeholder Forum is an international organisation working to advance sustainable development and promote democracy at a global level. Our work aims to enhance open, accountable and participatory international decision-making on sustainable development through enhancing the involvement of stakeholders in intergovernmental processes. For more information, visit: [www.stakeholderforum.org](http://www.stakeholderforum.org)

Outreach is a multi-stakeholder publication on climate change and sustainable development. Outreach is the longest continually produced stakeholder magazine in the sustainable development arena and has been produced at international meetings on the environment, including the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and at COP15 and COP16. Published as a daily edition, in both print and web form, Outreach provides a vehicle for critical analysis on key thematic topics in the sustainability arena as well as a voice of regional and local governments, women, indigenous peoples, trade unions, industry, youth and NGOs. To fully ensure a multi-stakeholder perspective, we aim to engage a wide range of stakeholders for article contributions and project funding.

If you are interested in contributing to Outreach, please contact the team ([gmacdonald@stakeholderforum.org](mailto:gmacdonald@stakeholderforum.org)) You can also follow us on Twitter: @OutreachLive

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# News from the negotiations - Day Two



**Freya Seath**  
Bioregional Development Group

This morning the Secretary General's High Level Panel on Global Sustainability presented a number of key highlights from their report 'Resilient People: Resilient Planet, A Future Worth Choosing', which is to be published on Monday. The report makes 56 recommendations.

Several areas mentioned by the panel included emphases on the need for transformation of the economy and the private sector, the importance of making strong linkages between the 3 pillars of sustainability, and, more specifically, a call for the creation of a task force to work on the development of Sustainable Development Goals that have been proposed to complement the Millennium Development Goals and integrated into a post 2015 framework.

- Statements given by governments, Major Groups and UN agencies this morning echoed many of the points made yesterday in plenary- the zero draft text lacks ambition and vision, with a need for stronger emphasis on means of implementation and action on the ground.
- I was reassured to hear many governments recognising the need to strengthen the role of civil society, with the Government of Brazil calling for an 'effective, realistic and active orientated' draft text that they believe is needed to ensure civil society will fully engage in the Rio+20 agenda.
- There has however been growing concern amongst Major Groups that the issue of occupied territories could stall negotiations, as witnessed during the CSD19 process.
- The informal-informal negotiations on sections I and II of the zero draft began this afternoon. While this process may be slow at times, a text is beginning to form which we only hope will deliver successful outcomes at Rio in June.

To access the Global Sustainability Panel's report 'Resilient People: Resilient Planet', which will be available online from Monday, go to: [www.un.org/gsp](http://www.un.org/gsp)

## Is Rio+20 on the radar at Davos?

**Sue Riddlestone**  
CEO & co-founder Bioregional  
Development Group



At the World Economic Forum in Davos today, Ban Ki Moon will host a panel of government Ministers from Brazil and Indonesia, along with chairman and chief executive of Unilever and Deutsche Bank, to discuss 'How the Rio+20 Summit can deliver an implementable agenda for sustainability and development?' For most delegates at this high level, primarily business, event this might be the first time they have heard about Rio+20.

I was lucky enough to be able to go to Davos this year. Many Presidents and Prime ministers have taken to the stage, however, the only mention of Rio+20 I heard unprompted was German Chancellor Angela Merkel, who noted the need to build on Kyoto at Rio and bring in binding commitments to halt irreversible damage to our planet. UK Prime Minister David Cameron made no reference to sustainability at all.

Other insights into Rio+20 were given by Former UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown, who stated that both business and government need to work together in reaching an agreement and The European Commissioner for Climate Action, Connie Hedegaard, who asserted that Rio+20 needs to focus on vital issues such as new targets for renewables and access to sustainable energy.

Among the overwhelming majority of business leaders, there was a surprising general lack of knowledge on Rio+20 or sustainability issues. I found exceptions with a banker who noted his frustrations with government failing to stick to their commitments and called for an international court to hold them to account. There was a general call for governments to legislate, work with business on regulation and creation of a level playing field. Governments always have to consider public opinion and this can hold them back from taking action. But as we know only too well, we have no time to keep fiddling while Rome burns. Those of us who care about the success of Rio+20 urgently need to re-double our efforts to get business and the wider civil society engaged in the process.

# Weapons of Mass Instruction

**David R. Woollcombe**  
 President, Peace Child International

If we learned one thing from our series of 30+ Rio+20 Youth Prepcoms in the course of 2011, it was that youth were angry that they had spent a lot of years in school - studying what their teachers told them to study - and the Rio+20 issues never came up.

In 24 countries, students told us that our debates, cabarets, games, workshops were the first they'd heard of peak oil, the challenge of alternative energy, harmful subsidies, one-planet living etc. Many had been educated in so-called 'good schools' and 'great universities' - but none of this stuff had ever come up!

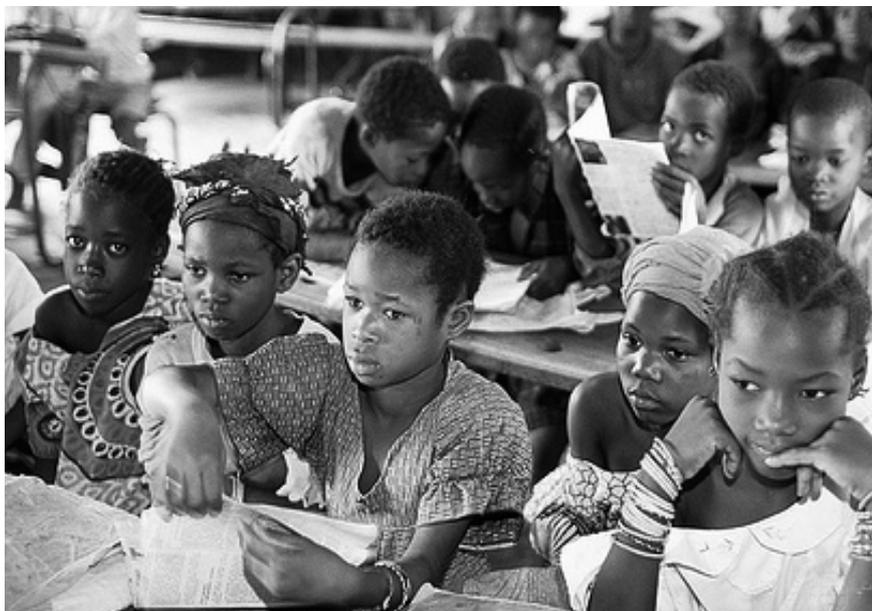
It is time that the UN owns up to its lack of leadership in this area. As with 'Education for All' - time and again it has set targets and time and again member states have failed to meet them. UNESCO's Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) is the last in a long-line of UN-led failures in this field. Despite all the high profile conferences and agreements made since Tbilisi in 1987 - a child passing through any school still has a much better chance of emerging with a sound knowledge of the challenges of the past 200 years, than about those of the next 50.

Why? Teachers tell us that they would be thrilled to teach these issues. Some courageous ones already do. But all are constrained by curricula dictated by government. Surely governments could concede on this? Effecting the actual transition from a brown to a green economy costs a lot - and is politically difficult. Training the youth who will have to make that change costs almost nothing and would have all-party support everywhere - unless there are vested interests who want to keep peak oil a secret.

The Peace Child story requires young people to imagine the future they would like to wake up to in 50 years from now - and then back-cast to what has to be done to achieve it. It is almost identical to the methodology employed by the UN's campaign, 'The Future We Want', which is launching an education programme in January 2013.

Why then, does the Zero Draft propose such weak, anodyne clauses on education?

The First (para. 98) repeats the call for Education for All and muddles it in with a call to 'strengthen education systems' to support sustainable development 'through enhanced teacher training and curriculum development.'



The Second (para. 99) calls, wisely, for the teaching of sustainable development at University to be included 'as a module across all disciplines' - but then appears to call for universities to be re-built along the lines of David Orr's Oberlin College Eco-teaching building to 'embed sustainable practices in learning and action'. Not a bad idea - but expensive, and surely not a priority.

The Third (para. 100) is even stranger. It calls for 'International Education Exchange activities' to promote sustainable development through fellowships and scholarships. Again, not a bad idea - but a pretty slight one: not worthy of a major treaty. Several delegations called for the Outcome Document to be shorter: there are a million ways to implement ESD - identifying a strange form of international exchange is only one of them, and really not worth including.

The Fourth and Final Clause (101) agrees to promote UNESCO's DESD beyond 2014, yet it has achieved next to nothing in the last ten years - is it wise to think it might achieve any more in the next ten?

In truth, these paragraphs represent a step backwards from the concrete steps outlined in 1992 in Chapter 36 of Agenda 21 which called on governments to:

- set up national advisory environmental education coordinating bodies; and
- prepare strategies aimed at integrating environment and development as a cross-cutting issue into education at all levels within three years.

I don't know of any government that did either of these things. Do you?

Member states would do well to listen to the voice of those who are sometimes called 'the victims of education' – youth. In our Youth Prepcoms, participants made demands for the text on education to be strengthened as follows:

- UN Member States acknowledge their failure to deliver a quality 'Education for All' after several attempts. We agree it is time to test a different approach – a cheaper and more effective approach than cramming 100+ pupils into a classroom. We hereby agree to empower young people to introduce the technique of pyramid peer education to teach all young citizens both in and out of school

basic literacy and numeracy by 31st December 2015 (Para. 98).

- UN Member States acknowledge their failure to 're-orient education towards sustainability' as promised in Agenda 21 in 1992. We agree to instruct our Ministers of Education to prepare comprehensive plans to ensure that sustainability is at the heart of every child's school learning from the day they enter primary school to the day they graduate college. Schools and colleges must become the crucible from which the ideas and concepts to drive Green Growth will emerge (Para. 99) ■

## The Future We Want to Live

**Lisa Curtis**

Youth Representative

When I was just beginning kindergarten, the leaders of the world came together in Rio de Janeiro for a groundbreaking Earth Summit that put the concept of sustainable development and biological diversity on the global political agenda.

While I was in the third grade, the United States whacked the teeth out of the world's first agreement on climate change by refusing to ratify the Kyoto Protocol. When America gave me the license to drink, I flew to Copenhagen and watched world negotiators water down the Copenhagen climate treaty till it was virtually worthless-effectively drowning out the cries of hope and change from our U.S. youth delegation and close to 100,000 other civil society members. Twenty years after the first Earth Summit, the leaders of the world are coming together for Rio+20 under the slogan of *the future we want*.

For the majority of my life and the lives of my peers, our leaders have worked hard to give us a future we don't want. Global energy needs are skyrocketing and the climate is heating up fast, with normally conservative institutions like the OECD, the IEA, and McKinsey predicting dire consequences from our carbon emissions and explosive population growth.

Twenty years after sustainable development was first put on the agenda, the world's youth are planning to call this meeting to order. After all, for us, this isn't merely about the future we want, it's about the future we will live.

So what type of future do we want to live? Well, world, we've already begun showing you. We've tweeted and facebooked our way into an Arab Spring that has



succeeded in removing dictators. We've #occupied cities across the world, calling for the global elite to pay their fair share. Now we're taking on a new type of tyranny, that of an energy system and a concept of development that a handful of fossil fuel companies and corrupt leaders have profited from, at the expense of our planet and the 99%.

Fossil fuel-based development is proving to be anything but sustainable. As Carl Pope recently wrote,

'There is not enough cheap oil or coal in the world to elevate the lives of the world's four billion poor; trying to do so will kill millions, mostly the poor, with soot, smog, and heavy metals; and will bankrupt the treasuries of nations like China, India and America that face trade deficits for the deadly carbon duo, coal and oil'.

We need to rapidly transition to clean energy, but more than that, we need to put our world on the path to sustainable development. Sustainable development encompasses a wide range of practices, but as our U.S. youth delegation is urging world leaders at Rio+20 to define it, 'sustainability' must underpin ecological, social, cultural, and economic principles. We want world leaders to think of development in the sense of creating a 'green economy', one that prioritises the well-being and basic needs of people and recognises that infinite material growth is impossible in a finite world. A green economy must minimise ecosystem degradation and move beyond GDP as the sole indicator of prosperity.

Our demands are great but our need is even greater. Watch out world, we're tired of the way you've been playing with our future ■



# Framing Policy Dialogues: a well-prepared society

**Pam Puntteney**

UNCS D Education Caucus

Recognising the number of global environmental challenges and security issues, there is a need to improve the knowledge base of all stakeholders, particularly decision-makers on the interplay of human and natural systems, with an understanding of new opportunities for investment, new technologies, and innovations, among others.

Policy-makers are in a position to decide what to do and when to act based upon available evidence and their beliefs about the risks and benefits of a green economy strategy. Currently, we are using 20th century approaches and models to address 21st century issues. In order to increase the responsive capacity of nation states based upon 21st century models to meet 21st century challenges, governance structures for sustainable development must be created as 'learning systems'.

This reality also brings to light that the success of outcomes from Rio+20 depends upon ready engagement and communications within institutions, with the public and private sectors, across fields and new sources of knowledge, and simultaneously on effective, broad-based multi-stakeholder collaborations. More importantly, a successful outcome would be to develop an institutional responsiveness that engages the public as part of a systems-wide strategy to understand what's working, what's not, and potential options to address crises within the social-cultural, and economic contexts and ecological conditions within each country.

## 21st Century Challenges

As global crises increase at pace, what we knew yesterday does not apply today. Supporting sustainable development requires knowledge of the interactions between human and natural systems, understanding of management levers, as well as technological developments and innovations, economic analysis, political will, and a framework that creates a capacity throughout and across all areas of society to respond to evolving needs.

No longer can we seek solutions to problems one at a time. Global environmental policies transcend traditional boundaries between sectors, nationalities, cultures, and generations. We all need to be able to recognise increasingly complex and inter-related issues where attempts to ameliorate one can alter or even

exacerbate the impacts of another. New knowledge of how multiple stresses affect human and natural systems requires decision-makers to have an ability to translate knowledge and awareness into usable information to colleagues, enabling them to make wise short-term judgments as scientific and local, national, and regional information is improved.

The 21st century challenge to global environmental security will require an unprecedented solidarity of purpose and concert of action from a well-prepared global society. Yet under the current conditions of globalisation, we are faced with the challenge that the complexity of living systems remains beyond full human comprehension. Fragmentation, biodiversity loss, lack of adequate access to water and sanitation, food insecurity, environmental degradation, and increasing poverty are occurring simultaneously. It is not enough to focus singularly on technology, trade and finance, or economic development. b

## Leadership, 2012 and Beyond - Means of Implementation

'Education, raising of public awareness and training are linked to virtually all areas in Agenda 21, and even more closely to the ones on meeting basic needs, capacity-building, data and information, science, and the role of major groups.' (Agenda 21, chapter 36.1)

Amidst new peaks of social, economic, and political turbulence in these first decades of the 21st century have emerged new models of collaborative efforts (within both private and public spheres) to address human and environmental security needs of the present and future. Civil society increasingly calls on communities of governance to develop better institutional responsiveness to these needs, while communities of governance increasingly seek structural reforms to their systems of managing these needs. On this pivotal point between crisis and opportunity, despair and hope, rests the aspiration of generations past and present (as expressed in Agenda 21, Section 4) for new models of leadership at every level and throughout society to bridge these gaps and propel the 'Means of Implementation' toward a sustainable global society for all.

The [UN CSD] Education Caucus 'Community of Educators' calls attention to the fact that, beyond basic education and literacy, environmental education is situated within Agenda 21 as a 'Means of Implementation' and, further, that the implementation of environmental education is situated at the core of these emerging 21st-century models ■

## MORE INFORMATION:

UN CSD Education Caucus

Founded in 1992 at the Earth Summit

Zero Draft Submission:

<http://bit.ly/educationcaucuszerodraft>

Pam Puntteney: [pipunt@umich.edu](mailto:pipunt@umich.edu)

# Global mechanism for science on sustainable development challenges

## Why we need unprecedented levels of harnessing science through international cooperation.

**Gisbert Glaser**  
International Council for Science (ICSU)



Over the past 20 years, development has moved us closer to the risk of transgressing the ‘planetary boundaries’ of our Earth system — from the climate, to biodiversity, to land use. Yet while facing these challenges we must further enhance efforts towards meeting present and future global needs, putting in place a green economy model, as well as securing greater social equity and human wellbeing.

Our human societies must change course. We must ensure that the outcome of Rio+20 includes concrete, actionable commitments, which are really commensurate with the urgent need to move humanity to a sustainable path of development. It must include much stronger commitments to bring about the transformational changes needed to eradicate poverty and to bridge the development divide between the North and the South, while respecting planetary boundaries.

After the agricultural and industrial revolutions, humanity needs a global sustainability revolution based on knowledge and innovation. But there will be no accelerated transition to a sustainable future unless Rio+20 supports initiating new, unprecedented efforts and commitments of harnessing science, technology and innovation through international cooperation, including for capacity building in developing countries. To this end, Rio+20 should include in its outcome an action item which would lead to the establishment of a global mechanism tasked to significantly strengthen and better coordinate international scientific collaboration on the global sustainable development challenges.

The International Council for Science (ICSU) calls for Rio+20 to launch an inclusive process to establish such a mechanism. The EU made a similar proposal in its written submission to the Zero Draft.

The mechanism would provide a platform which brings together, and builds on, existing international scientific cooperation bodies, such as ICSU and its global research

communities, and UN system organisations like UNESCO, UNEP and WMO, as well as national and international science and technology funders and other stakeholders, in particular representatives of major users of knowledge, technology and innovation for sustainable development.

The functions of the mechanism will have to be defined through an inclusive consultative process. From ICSU’s point of view, the functions would include, among others: to develop a coherent and coordinated approach to a major strengthening international scientific cooperation on major sustainable development challenges; to promote and coordinate research and innovation by various actors in this regard, with a major focus on interdisciplinary research including all relevant domains and disciplines of science, and drawing on research capabilities in the North and the South; to actively collaborate with policy-makers, funders, business and industry, and all relevant stakeholders in society in the promotion, co-design and implementation of research and rapid communication and sharing of new knowledge; to promote and coordinate targeted capacity building in science (natural, social, economic, health and engineering sciences) and technology, in developing countries through North-South, South-South and triangular cooperation; and finally to mobilise and coordinate major new funding at the international level for the actions above.

The new mechanism will have an important role to play in linking international research and higher education communities to international scientific assessment bodies such as IPCC, IBPES and the proposed ‘regular assessment of the state of the planet and the Earth’s carrying capacity’ (paragraph 52 in the Zero Draft). Similarly, the mechanism would be able to make a significant contribution to enhancing the interface between science and policy-making (paragraph 53).

One major building block could be the new international research initiative ‘Future Earth – research for global sustainability’, to be launched at Rio+20 by an alliance including ICSU, the International Social Science Council (ISSC), national research funders and several UN system organisations. It aims to deliver knowledge to enable societies to meet their sustainable development goals in the coming decades. Key criteria comprise: addressing global and regional sustainability challenges; partnership between scientists, funders, users, services; strong regional nodes; cutting-edge network structure; active engagement with decision-makers; active engagement of the full range of disciplines ■

### For more information

Planet Under Pressure - New Knowledge Towards Solutions:  
([www.planetunderpressure2012.net](http://www.planetunderpressure2012.net))

Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development - Linking Science and Policy at Rio+20 ([www.icsu.org/rio20](http://www.icsu.org/rio20))

# Building a Diverse Coalition for Climate & Energy Solutions on the Road to Rio

M. K. Dorsey  
 Prof. of Environmental Studies, Dartmouth College

The US President's State of Union referenced energy policy 23 times and climate policy once. The White House still can, and must, lead the nation and the world on both climate change and energy policy. One place this can be done is on the road to the approaching Rio+20 Summit.

In December, a Yale University survey showed Americans say that a candidate's views on global warming will be either the 'single most important issue' (2%) or 'one of several important issues' (52%). The Yale survey also found 'that a large majority of Americans (66%) support locking the US into a global treaty to 'cut emissions 90% by 2050'. A smaller majority (65%) also said 'developing sources of clean energy should be a very high (30%) or high (35%) priority.'

Even the often misjudged 'marginalised, non-environmental demographics' or African Americans, 'believe that global warming is causing serious problems now, and more than 80% want the federal government to take strong action to deal with it' as another December survey, from the Commission to Engage African Americans on Climate revealed.

So it's fair to say most Americans, like a majority of the world's citizens, share the President's concerns that 'differences' in Congress 'may be too deep right now to pass a comprehensive plan to fight climate change'.

“ A smaller majority (65%) also said 'developing sources of clean energy should be very high (30%) or high (35%) priority.' ”

Further, it is clear: All Americans, regardless of difference, want real commitments and government action on both climate policy and energy and policy.

On good days, beyond the gridlocked Congress, Washington's energy and climate policy process seems ripped from pages of a how-to-guide for crony capitalism. Self-dealing insiders along a fantastic and unlikely spectrum from greedy oil companies, to obsequious lawyers, avaricious financiers over to 'corporate captured' environmental groups - I would argue - configure dirty deals, move money into their own coffers, harm marginalised communities and lock the planet on a pathway to climate catastrophe-all in one go. I've heard that representatives from some oil companies even have a name for the stakeholder collaborations they engage in and donations that they openly make to large conservation groups: 'reputation insurance'. It's all just business as usual on a good day.

On bad days, which are more normal deep inside Washington's divided government, energy and climate policy coordination is little more than kakistocratic—what the Greeks called government by the worst or least qualified representatives. Sitting Senators and Representatives openly deny the established climate science and face no consequences. Those in the State Department openly recognise that climate crisis will become a big problem and simultaneously negotiate to consider taking decisive international action. Those taking arguably the most action, do so in secret, like those in the CIA's Center on Climate Change and National Security.

So when the State of Union references energy policy 23 times and climate policy once, it's not just lopsided, but symptomatic of the best of the White House and what and whom surround it (right down to its foggiest bottom).

Focusing on just energy, outside of a major climate policy overhaul, is not enough—even if Congress is divided.

The President and his advisors need to follow the lead of a more diverse ecosystem of environmentalists—not just upper-middle class activists and policy wonks, but working class citizens on the boundary of polluting refineries.

Those on the domestic and global margins must be part of the unfolding dialogue to reboot US climate policy—which presently stalls building robust global climate policy.

US African Americans and Native Americans, whom studies show would have born the brunt of havoc from a ruptured Keystone XL pipeline, must be included as much as Afro-Brazilians, indigenous people, and countless other groups too often left out of critical multilateral discussions.

In the White House and across many agencies, officials have to work both across the aisle and with new constituencies. To be fair, some already do this—but more must.

That the White House's Michael Strautmanis watched the State of the Union with one of the co-chairs from the Commission to Engage African Americans on Climate is good sign.

Resuscitating old, failed alliances with overly corporatised NGOs in bed with Big Oil and other polluting firms is a recipe for disaster. Those in power are forging new ties with not only the 80% of African Americans that openly say they want the federal government to take strong action to deal both climate and energy policy—but also bringing their Afro-Brazilian counterparts to the table on the Road to Rio+20.

A newly created joint White House - US Environmental Protection Agency's effort seeks to forge new multi-stakeholder collaborations on bilateral environmental justice concerns, beginning initially with dialogues

between affected African American and Afro-Brazilian communities, their two governments, firms, and other institutions.

Failure to broaden the tent, and engage many hands-on-deck will yield doomsday, albeit for the marginalised. UN agencies forecast that, left unchecked, a climate change-related body count could pass 300,000 a year—concentrated in the poorest reaches of the developing world. If the deaths don't come, livelihoods will be decimated, as crops fail, diseases scourge and extreme weather compounds the crisis.

In the last year of the US President's first term, half the battle to forge a coherent plan on both climate and energy policy is cutting through the gridlock and hyper-partisanship. The other essential half, is engaging the vast super-majority, perhaps embodied in spirit of The Global Protester, and the ignored constituencies, who are on the proverbial climate and energy frontlines fighting to Rio and beyond ■

# A Global Policy Framework for Corporate Sustainability

**Jeannet Lingan**  
Stakeholder Forum



Trust and credibility have become a focal point for corporations today, especially during the wake of the financial crisis. A result of this is that there is now an array of corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives to help businesses adopt socially responsible and sustainable long-term strategies. However, this does not go far enough. A large proportion of corporations are still failing to adopt even the most basic of CSR practices and without

a global legal framework, the situation will continue to worsen. In response to this, there is now a clear call for the international community to re-start a dialogue on developing an international convention on corporate responsibility and accountability.

Over the past three decades, discussions in the international negotiations on environmental and social issues around this issue have provided a platform to build upon. Despite regulation of corporations not being included in the first Earth Summit Agenda in 1992, a chapter was prepared by the UN Centre for Transnational Corporations. The subject was raised again during the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in 2002. Looking forward to Rio+20, paragraph 24 of the Zero Draft gives us yet another opportunity to reinvigorate the conversations around the private sector's contribution to global sustainable development efforts.

An international convention on corporate responsibility and accountability will provide a coherent framework to incorporate the private sector into global sustainable development efforts, establish a level playing field for all corporations with clear rules for practices and obligations, therefore increasing business accountability and performance, and would give governments a better tool to ensure practices are aligned to international agreements and societal expectations.

## Taking bold action on private sector sustainability

There is now an opportunity for different sectors to provide their inputs and perspectives and work towards a multi-stakeholder proposal for a convention on corporate social responsibility and accountability within the preparatory process for Rio+20.

A global multi-stakeholder process engaging civil society organisations, corporations, and corporate social responsibility initiatives is being convened by Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future and Vitae Civilis. The objective is to create synergies with existing initiatives and sectors, and to pursue a coherent international strategy for securing a call for a convention on corporate responsibility and accountability in the Rio+20 final document ■

**For more information:**

<http://www.csradialogue2012.org>



# Rio+20 - we need more flesh on the bones

Staffan Nilsson

President of the European Economic and Social Committee

The zero draft, which summarises key issues forming the basis of the Rio+20 final agreement is a good starting point for subsequent negotiations. But it still falls far short of the hopes and ambitions of organised civil society in Europe, for what could and should be achieved by the Rio process.

We look to the European institutions - the Council, the Commission and the Parliament - to be equally resolute in pressing the case for a stronger and more purposeful programme to be created at Rio, and to give our European negotiators a powerful mandate to settle for nothing less.

There was one sentence in the blog article by Stephen Hale in the Guardian recently which really resonated with me and our work on Rio+20 here at the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC): *'global summits don't make big promises unless civil society demands it'*. I agree that we need to unite to tackle common problems. The EESC is striving to formulate a strong joint message from civil society organisations across Europe, to European and world leaders, about the change we need Rio+20 to drive.

We are organising a conference on 7-8 February, the message of which is 'Go sustainable, be responsible!' and the goal of which is to voice and bring together European civil society's contributions in preparation for Rio+20. We are also gathering comments on the zero draft through a virtual conversation within the European civil society community, where stakeholders can comment on the document or simply submit answers to the one question I also keep asking myself: What would you advise our leaders to commit to on behalf of our children and grandchildren?

I'm happy to see that the zero draft recognises the limitations of GDP as a measure of well-being. Of course, proposals for alternative measuring tools involve widespread public dialogue. We held a hearing on 'GDP on the road to Rio+20: Civil society's involvement in the development of complementary indicators' on 26 January, which aimed to put forward ideas on ways to allow for effective civil society involvement in this very technical, but highly political debate.

We want to put across a strong message to European leaders and to the world about what Rio could, and should, achieve. We need a suitable programme for greening the global economy that is still not set out in the zero draft and which is essential for bringing about a real and sustainable recovery from the current economic problems. We will also need to draw special attention to adequate financial support for developing countries to face these transformation challenges. This needs to be further developed.

As to governance, the draft includes some interesting ideas about strengthening the UN machinery for advancing sustainable development and I am particularly happy to see the proposal for an Ombudsperson for Future Generations taken up in the draft.

However, the zero draft does not yet properly address the social and equity agenda. Neither has it much to say about strengthening the national machinery, or the crucial role of regional and local government, business, social partners and other sectors of civil society.

The EU has an essential part to play over the next six months in driving this forward. Much still needs to be done to put more flesh on the dry bones of this first draft and create an agreement and a new global programme of action that is commensurate with the sustainability challenge the world is facing ■



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Staffan Nilsson is president of the European Economic and Social Committee, an EU consultative body.



# profile. Liz Thompson

**How did you get the role you are in today and what advice would you give to aspiring earth champions?**

Love the earth; see yourself as one of her children and work hard to protect her. My road here has been long and interesting. I was a Minister of Environment for 14 years and did a lot of work nationally, in the Caribbean, and with international NGOs before being recruited for my current position. Many of my policy initiatives and then later work as a consultant has been very developmental and has made a significant difference to society, environment, and economy. Barbados was one of the first countries in the world to have a National Green Economy Policy, the development of which I co-wrote and led when I was Minister in 2007. My career has been a fun journey because I was doing something I genuinely loved.

**Favourite quote:**

“When you fall do not lay there waiting for traffic to run over you, get up, dust yourself off and continue on your journey.” My school principal told me this when I was 16 and it has become the philosophy by which I lived my personal and professional life.

**What prompted your early interest in the environment?**

Actually I am ashamed to admit that until I was appointed as a Minister of Environment in 1994/95, my only interest was in going to the beach. I really had no understanding of the issue, its interconnections or importance. I soon became passionate about environment and its link to development.

**Describe your first attempt to ‘save the planet’:**

Well as I said I did not really consider myself an environmentalist. Yet I was doing various things like trying to rescue animals as a child; doing the recycling; organising relevant events; or yelling at people who litter and having them threaten to do me serious injury for not minding my own business! There have been many ways that I have been trying to ‘save the planet’ both formal and informal.

**What do you believe should be achieved at Rio+20?**

When I was a Minister I co-wrote and led the development of the Barbados National Green Economy Policy in 2007. We had to have been one of the first countries in the world to formally have such a policy. I truly believe that we need to transition to a global green economy and that the business sector must be engaged to be part of that effort. Rio must serve as the platform from which that global transition is launched.

**What is your role in this process?**

My role is very broad and encompasses all aspects of the work leading up to Rio and the negotiation process, both in preparation for and at the conference itself. In essence my role is to help to lay the ground work for a successful Rio+20 Conference and build support for its themes and initiatives especially the transition to a global green economy.

**How important is the Rio+20 process?**

In building consensus amongst member-states, reaching out to non-state actors, especially the business sector, and demonstrating to people all over the world who are hurting from social, economic or environmental problems; those who had national uprisings calling for a greater stake in the way they are governed and a sustainable quality of life and hope for their children’s future – for these people Rio should be a platform for change which will help to deliver a new sustainable system and better manage consumption. The process for getting us to agreement at Rio is critical.

**What do you think the priorities for action should be in 2012 in the run up to RIO+20?**

The priorities in the run-up are: to persuade the disbelievers in the green economy, get convergence on the issues particularly the framework for Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) around which concerted action can be galvanized and improvements effected, in much the same way that the MDGs were able to accomplish. And after Rio, we just have to get the job done. All of us!

**Nationality:** Barbadian, (born in UK but lived longer in Barbados)

**Country of residence:** USA

**Current Position:** UN Assistant Secretary General/Executive Coordinator Rio+20 consumption and production.

# The future we bequeath

Kirsty Schneeberger

Stakeholder Forum

There is nothing more powerful than an idea whose time has come.  
That idea is with us today. That time is now.

Many of the recommendations that were submitted to the Zero Draft process are not really new. Many have been developing for years, decades even. Often the best ideas do not come to fruition straight away, but instead require time to develop and mature until they become ripe for the picking.

As it currently stands, however, the text needs a unifying vision that will serve as a rallying point and act as an illuminator to steer the talks onto the right track when the threat of derailing looms large. It needs more than just a few paragraphs to do this, it needs a deeper understanding of the vision of 'our common future.'

Agreeing to such a thing, many could argue, will be difficult: Member States are used to negotiating from a position of their national interests based on today. The Rio+20 negotiations will require them to look ahead and to recognise that such a common future is much greater than the sum of their individual parts.

The four words, The Future We Want, are dancing off everyone's lips here in New York, because people here get it. They get that the discussions in the negotiating rooms

can impact on the future for the better – but only if we grasp this opportunity with both hands. The alternative is that we squander it away until another day; though that day may never come.

We are steps closer to institutionalising the principle of intergenerational equity (thanks to paragraph 57) in the form of either a UN High Commissioner for Future Generations or national equivalents (or both) such as an ombudsman. But there is more to it than agreeing to a document, or even creating a new institution (important though they are). The future is about to be written, both metaphorically and literally.

And whilst the pens scrawl across the page and the keys tap away determining the colour, shape, and feel of that future, we must remember that this is not our future. It is unlikely that many of the people in that negotiating room will see it, taste it or touch it.

In reality, this process is not only about articulating the future we want, or even describing a future worth choosing: we will need to understand that above all, the Rio+20 process is about the future that we bequeath ■

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## Save the date! Global Transition green economy dialogue, New York, 17th and 18th March

On **March 17th and 18th**, just before the March discussions take place, the Global Transition 2012 is organising the Global Transition 2012 Dialogue on the key themes in the zero draft relating to the green economy; together with the following partners:

- UNDESA
- UNDP
- UN Global Compact
- UN NGLS
- UNITAR
- Major Groups
- Green Economy Coalition
- New Economics Institute
- Instituto Vitae Civilis
- CIVICUS
- Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)
- Centre for Environment and Development (Sri Lanka) nrg4SD

The green economy conference will build on the work done by the Global Transition 2012 in its first phase of activities. In particular it will:

- Build on the challenge papers that have been produced by the group (for the zero draft policy process);
- Use papers produced for the conference by organising partners; and
- The analysis of the zero draft submissions – in relation to the green economy theme.

Using this information the conference will create a space for participants to engage in open discussion, present ideas on key themes of the Green Economy, and **begin to form clusters** around these core themes – clusters around these key themes that will enable a more constructive dialogue on the zero draft.

The venue is to be confirmed, but will be in New York City. To register your interest and for more information please email: [kirstys@stakeholderforum](mailto:kirstys@stakeholderforum) and see <http://globaltransition2012.org/>

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