

Message to the GC UNEP Fifth Meeting- MC

23 February 2011

Delivered by Gino Van Begin, Deputy Secretary General, ICLEI-Local Governments for sustainability on behalf of Major Group “Local Authorities”

Today 50 % of the world population lives in cities -with an even higher percentage in emerging economies and developing countries-, 72% of energy is consumed in cities, 75 % of CO₂ is generated in cities. These facts requires that decision-making on resources is increasingly taken at the local level and creates new demands as well as opportunities to ensure a green, eco-efficient and resilient management of our global resources.

Since the Rio Summit in 1992, cities and local governments have continuously entered into Local Agenda 21 processes worldwide; we supported and engaged with citizens, businesses, research and other stakeholders to achieve local sustainability locally. We have adopted numerous legislation, policies and measures to improve the urban environment in a sustainable manner. Likewise as national governments, we adopted individual pledges to cut CO₂ emissions and we are strongly engaged into biodiversity by valuing the services of local and regional ecosystems.

Local and regional governments welcome that the UN institutions have foreseen in dialogues with Major Groups in the various international frameworks and conventions and as part of IEG.

However, as it has been said here by numerous delegates, the IEG established 40 years ago proves not to be up to the environmental challenges of today and is inadequate to protect the environment for our citizens in the future.

In our view what is needed, is not only a re-design of the international environmental governance but also a re-design of the cooperation with civil society and Major Groups.

We, local and regional governments, call upon all national governments and international organisations to seek a new generation of the existing dialogues with major groups that exist in today's various international environmental frameworks of action.

We wish to have a debate -here and in Rio 2012- on a “Global” Environmental Governance that includes local and regional governments as well as all other civil society expertise and partnerships as opposed to just a debate an “inter”-national environmental governance.

We would like to see a move from the current structures of “dialogue” with local authorities as a major group to structures of “partnership” with local authorities, based on commitment and accountability.

In terms of local authorities, there are a number of experiences already in place. Let me just take 1 example, the Covenant of Mayors in Europe which we as ICLEI strongly supports. This is a Covenant of commitments between Mayors and the European Commission on climate change. ICLEI has leveraged this initiative at global level through the Mexico City Pact signed now by 146 cities, representing 160 million people in developing and developed countries. Similar to the European Commission in the European Covenant of Mayors, ICLEI invites UNEP to consider to come into the global initiative of the Mexico City Pact to ensure direct international accountability of Mayors-signatories as one concrete step within a new model of “Global” Environmental Governance.

Thank you for your attention.