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Forests, Indigenous Peoples and Rio+20

Heads of State:
zero deforestation is what the world needs

a daily multi-stakeholder magazine on climate change and sustainable development

outreach.

17 June 2012

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After vocal public opposition, and what has likely been some serious back room wrangling from the NGO sector, forests are slowly edging their way further onto the draft agenda for Rio+20. Positive, though perhaps surprising, news. In 1992 discussions on forests were an integral part of the original Rio Earth Summit negotiations, and were central to many of the meeting outcomes. These included a statement of principles to guide the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests, which were noted as being ‘essential to economic development and the maintenance of all forms of life’; as well as the formation of the UNFCCC and the UNCBD. The relative lack of centrality of forests to the initial debates during the current Rio conference, twenty years later, has therefore left many commentators deeply perplexed.

The maintenance of healthy forest ecosystems is of fundamental importance to each of the priority thematic areas targeted within the most recent Rio draft Outcome Document. Forests cover over 31% of the global land mass, and the resources they provide contribute to the livelihoods of more than a quarter of the world’s population. The natural capital held in forests yields ecosystem services that support global health, climate, livelihood, water, and food securities – if you count these securities off on your fingers you can metaphorically hold the future of the world in the palm of your hand – and yet forests are only mentioned twice in the current draft text, and only then in narrow references to biodiversity and conservation.

However, the failure of the pre-conference texts and debates to highlight the fundamental dependencies and synergies between the priority themes is of greater concern. The various interest groups are becoming increasingly polarised – oceans and water, green jobs and cities, food security and land degradation – in attempting to carve out their own space in this crowded agenda. The failure of these groups, the forest community included, to promote a more cross cutting dialogue, may yet be the undoing of Rio+20. For without a framework agenda that recognises the interdependencies between themes as a catalyst to action, much time is likely to be lost in initial debates, rather than spent outlining a roadmap for the future, in what is already a very short conference.

The bottom line is that if the outcomes from Rio+20 are only strong on certain themes, not only will we have missed an opportunity to define a holistic future direction for sustainable development, we will have also missed the point – for development to be sustainable it surely must be fully integrated.

With this integration in mind, a key focus of the negotiations will be the ‘green economy’ as a driver for sustainable development, and much of the rhetoric in advance of the meeting has focused on how this can be defined. However, in order to gauge the true success of sustainable development, we must first urgently account for the true value of natural resources – or natural capital – in providing the health, livelihoods, food, climate and water securities within the ‘green economy’, or else any development may be inherently unsustainable. Crucially, current economic indices of development (e.g. GDP, HDI, World Bank Living Standard Measurement) are blind to income derived from, or linked to, natural resources. For example, forests provide around 25% of the total income for people living in or near them (more than that derived from agricultural activities), figures which are invisible to current development statistics. Forests, with their strong linkages to many of the core concerns of the sustainable development agenda, provide an ideal testing ground for this natural capital accounting process. For sustainable development to be credible, the Rio+20 conference must produce a roadmap for accounting for natural capital, with forests at its heart. One that outlines the systemic changes required to ensure that ecosystem services provided by natural resources are economically valued and incorporated within our social and economic models.

In 1992 at the end of the first Earth Summit in Rio, the then UN secretary-general, Boutros Boutros-Ghali, said that “it is possible for us to squander our global resources for a few more decades, but ultimately if we do nothing, then the storm will break on the heads of future generations. For them it will be too late”. The storm clouds that were once on our horizon are now overhead. We are that generation, and it is now our time to act.
Forests - which were a key issue for the 1992 Earth Summit - fell off the global radar screen a few years after. It wasn't until the latter half of 2000, when the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) made decisions on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation (REDD+), that forests came into the centre stage again. Rio+20 should sustain the global concern around forests, and ensure that the roles of indigenous peoples in the sustainable use and protection of forests are strengthened.

Indigenous peoples, especially those who live and depend on forest ecosystems, have been actively participating in the UN Forum on Forests (UNFF), but this engagement only lasted a few years. By 2008, there were hardly any indigenous organisations participating and, according to those who have participated, the UNFF has not been serious in addressing the issues they have raised. They felt that the interests of States and the forest industry always overshadowed their issues and they could not get their recommendations reflected in the final decisions. Clearly, engagements between indigenous peoples and the UNFF are woefully inadequate.

There needs to be more sustained and frank dialogues between indigenous peoples and the UNFF, and its Secretariat, which should result in concrete joint actions. One result of Rio+20 maybe a partnership forged between indigenous peoples and the UNFF, especially in the implementation of a non-legally binding forest agreement.

There are several facts which need to be considered in the discussion of forests issues. First, is that indigenous peoples, especially those who live in tropical rainforests and dryland forests, are still the poorest of the poor, and the ones who suffer the worst forms of human rights violation. Secondly, most of the world’s remaining tropical rainforests are found in indigenous peoples’ territories. Whether these territories are legally recognised by States as indigenous-owned or not, there are substantial overlaps between standing forests and indigenous peoples’ land. Thirdly, there are still many conflicts, armed and unarmed, raging in these areas. Fourthly, deforestation and forest degradation contribute about 17-20% of the total global greenhouse gas emissions.

These have several implications which need to be considered in decision-making at Rio+20. Significant numbers of indigenous peoples have succeeded to stop States and the private sector from logging and mining their forests. We, and our ancestors, have managed to save our forests through assertion of our rights to our lands, territories and resources, and use of customary governance and traditional knowledge systems. Our simple lifestyles and cultures – embedded with values we hold dear, such as harmony with the Earth and respect for nature, reciprocity, caring and solidarity – have also enabled us to save these last remaining forests.

It is crucial that Rio recognises the importance of our traditional knowledge and customary systems of managing and restoring ecosystems. It is within this context that we are also urging States to consider culture as a fourth dimension of sustainable development. Our culture, which includes our world views, knowledge, customary laws and governance systems have ensured that we have kept our forests alive. Without these cultures and the norms – which we try hard to live by – our forests – which provide the ecosystem services we all enjoy – would have all disappeared.

The centrality of the respect of our rights, enshrined in the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, is another key message from us. This applies to all forest-related issues, including REDD+ policies and activities. We do not believe REDD+ can be implemented successfully if our rights continue to be violated, and the drivers of deforestation are not addressed comprehensively. This is why we fought hard for the inclusion of human rights and safeguards in the climate change negotiations. Rio+20 should reiterate that human rights of indigenous peoples should be respected in all climate change adaptation and mitigation measures.

The lack of basic social services in forest communities, and the blatant discrimination against indigenous peoples living in forests, should also be addressed. States are obligated to address these issues. In addition, mechanisms for conflict mediation and transformation in forest territories of indigenous peoples should be put in place. Finally, we should be able to the access funds and technical resources needed to continue to protect, and sustainably use, our forests.
Cultural ecocide: the Awa tribe

Sarah Cunningham
Eradicating Ecocide

When the story emerged of how the Awa tribe - with its mere 355 surviving members - was being massacred as they tried to protect their sacred forests from armed loggers, the world briefly sat up and listened. One of the many reasons why this story resonated was the fact that this was a community that had never had any contact with the outside world before. The tragedy of their first direct experience of other people was of their indigenous rights being violated and ultimately regarded as insignificant within a legal framework.

The Brazilian congress has a period of four months to analyse the vetoes of the new Forest Code, but if the bill goes through it will effectively give loggers and farmers legal rights to destroy 220,000 square kilometres of forest, an area of rainforest equal in size to Britain and France combined. Huge logging conglomerates - and their power over congress in Brazil - will be given the opportunity to dictate the destiny of the source of one fifth of the world's oxygen.

With President Dilma Rousseff's decision on Friday 25th May to veto only 12 articles from the new Code and adopt 31 amendments, environmentalists and local farmers are adamant that a total veto is the only way to protect the rainforest.

But it is not just the forests that are being eradicated in this situation; this case is also an example of cultural ecocide, a concept that international environmental barrister Polly Higgins develops in her new book, Earth Is Our Business. Higgins also recognises that our main obstacle in situations like that of the Awa tribe, is that the law inevitably puts profit first. Currently, a corporation is duty bound by law to maximise profit for its shareholders. This pursuit of individual economic interests, regardless of the negative consequences, is a hindrance to sustainable development. But this can be changed - by creating an international law of Ecocide, where mass environmental damage and destruction can be prohibited.

To achieve true sustainable development, and ensure our right to life is truly protected, we need to outlaw destructive business practices and create a law that opens the floodgates to green, clean, and life-enhancing business. A law that does just that is the proposal to make Ecocide a crime.

Ecocide is defined as the mass ‘damage, destruction to or loss of ecosystems in a given territory, whether by human agency or by other causes, to such an extent that peaceful enjoyment by the inhabitants of that territory has been severely diminished’.

This is a transformative law that puts an end to mass damage and destruction, once and for all. It will act as a massive pre-emptive mechanism to stop investment into destructive industrial activity, by holding those who commit Ecocide, including Heads of State and CEOs, personally liable for the crime. It will make business sense to invest in the green economy.

More info
The Eradicating Ecocide team is at Rio+20 so please contact us below if you would like to schedule a meeting or get more information about the campaign.

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How to achieve the forests we want

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Less than 20% of the world’s original forest ecosystems remain intact, and their continuing rapid loss threatens to undermine not only the broader sustainable development objectives of Rio+20 but also the full and effective enjoyment of human rights, including the right to a healthy environment. Rights and ecosystems must be considered together, both in the context of international environmental governance and the green economy. The Outcome Document (version 2nd June 2012) recognises the multiple benefits of forests to people, but provides neither sufficient guidance nor the means to protect it. In particular, the text’s reliance on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) without concrete performance standards is of great concern.

An explicit recognition of a rights-based approach to forest protection is critical to the sustainable management of forests. As environmental pressures grow and resources dwindle, there is increasing recognition that a healthy environment is indispensable for the realization of human rights, as rights cannot be enjoyed without access to clean air, water, and the ecosystem services that support life on earth. At Rio+20, countries must take decisive steps toward reinforcing the linkage between forest protection and enjoyment of the right to a healthy environment. Sustainable management of forests must also be conducted in a way that fully respects the rights of indigenous peoples and local communities, including free and prior informed consent, land tenure and customary rights, and the access rights established in Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration. In the context of initiatives to reduce deforestation and forest degradation (REDD+), Rio+20 provides an opportunity to enhance and harmonise existing social and environmental safeguards, which are critical to ensuring respect for human rights and promoting sustainable development.

Truly sustainable forest management must be socially and ecologically sustainable and backed by enforceable measures. Forest protection cannot simply rely on voluntary mechanisms such as the Non-Legally Binding Instrument on all Types of Forests, nor on market-based instruments based on voluntary certification. Voluntary instruments have proven ineffective in reducing the degradation and loss of forest ecosystems over the past two decades, particularly in tropical regions where most deforestation is occurring. Countries must ensure that sustainable forest management is based on clear and enforceable performance standards, whose approach should protect biodiversity, respect the rights of local and indigenous peoples, and provide meaningful development benefits to communities living in and around forests.

We welcome the commitment of countries to halt the loss of global forest cover by 2030 at the latest. However, in order to preserve existing forest ecosystems and restore those that have been degraded, these commitments must be legally binding and time-bound. The Outcome Document should call for such actions to be taken immediately in light of the current rate of deforestation, which has seen around 13 million hectares of forest lost per year over the past decade. Countries must prioritise the protection of the world’s remaining intact natural forests, which are essential to maintaining broader ecosystem benefits. This entails halting industrial scale logging in those forests and prioritising locally-controlled management of forests generally. Initiatives such as REDD+ should be used to break the cycle of industrial-scale timber extraction and deforestation by placing an economic value on the role of standing forests.

Lastly, tackling deforestation and forest degradation cannot be achieved without addressing underlying drivers, such as unsustainable levels of consumption of forest products and agricultural commodities. The Outcome Document rightly calls for more robust and transparent forest governance and law enforcement, secure land tenure, community-based forest management and efforts to combat illegal logging, among others, but it is critical that this be accompanied by a commitment to end unsustainable production and consumption patterns that drive forest loss. In particular, developed countries must commit to binding measures to end the use of forest products from illegal and unsustainable sources.

As Ban Ki-Moon said, “Rio+20 is a once-in-a-generation opportunity”. Forest ecosystems provide irreplaceable life-support functions at the local, regional, and global scale, and Rio+20 is an opportunity to pave the way for their protection and restoration for the benefit of present and future generations.

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Yesterday, during the closing plenary of Prep Com III, a new paragraph on education was presented to the Member States. The paragraph, encouraging Member States to promote non-formal education in the context of sustainable development, was brought about by effective coordination of the lobbying efforts of the Major Group for Children and Youth (MGCY). This breakthrough is a little sign of hope, in a process that has been overshadowed by a lack of ambition and worrying decrease in stakeholder participation.

The MGCY has advocated for non-formal education for a long time, as this is a topic that is very relevant for young people. Non-formal education includes structured forms of education that supplement classical educational institutions. Examples include youth clubs and scouting, as well as other forms of cultural and sport activities and more subject-specific learning. It can help to empower marginalised groups, such as women and girls, and assist those affected by disasters when the formal education system is not sufficient. During Prep Com III, with only one paragraph on education left to be agreed, the Green Economy task-force of the MGCY were not hopeful that informal-education would be included in the text.

Yesterday's evolution of the text on education was a major breakthrough for the MGCY. Following discussion with the responsible Chair and friended delegations, the MGCY set up an impressive lobby apparatus to include non-formal education in the text. All MGCY members – from all over the world – were mobilised at short notice to lobby delegations and spread the word within their networks. While no country appeared to oppose, none of them felt able to propose the change themselves. Given the fact that an amendment to an agreed paragraph was not possible, only a new paragraph, one that was agreed by all countries before the meeting, would be accepted by the Chair.

With the support of the Swiss delegation, a new paragraph – ‘Education 2bis’ – was drafted based on agreed wording of a UN resolution on youth from 2010. This text was shared with other delegations throughout the evening, with the aim of proposing the new paragraph in the final meeting of the Prep Com. There were six hours left to reach agreement. Printouts of the new paragraph were distributed and gradually offers of support trickled in. Although a lot of delegations were supportive, some had to wait for confirmation from their capitals. Thanks to the new paragraph the youth voice reached the very top!

As the meeting came to a close, last minute conversations and whispers were exchanged around the room. The last paragraph of the Education section was to be agreed upon and, with youth in the room on tenterhooks, the new paragraph was proposed by the Swiss delegation. However, the G77 were unable to agree without consultation with the rest of the group. The decision was postponed until later that evening. As the Chair attempted to move to the next section, the EU, Australia and the US continued to speak up in support of the new paragraph, stressing the importance of supporting stakeholder views. “What we learn outside the classroom is just as important as what we learn inside”, said one delegate. The facilitator brought these comments to a close, saying that a general agreement by 10pm was to be found in order to prevent the paragraph to be dropped.

The MGCY increased its lobbying efforts and focused entirely on G77 members. Little by little, the G77 expressed their support for the new paragraph. By the time the meeting resumed, the Swiss delegation felt confident enough to propose the new paragraph, which was agreed unanimously. The frantic 36 hours concluded as “Paragraph 2 bis” was announced in the plenary to applause.
The Prince’s Rainforests Project (PRP) was established by His Royal Highness The Prince of Wales, in 2007, in order to draw attention to the urgent need to protect the world’s remaining tropical rainforests, and to contribute to a global consensus on the best practical ways to achieve this.

Since that time, the PRP has convened leaders, governments, civil society and the private sector, from around the world, with a view to address and advance agreement on key issues such as REDD+ finance, forest governance, forest and Indigenous Peoples, and the agricultural drivers of deforestation. There is no better, nor more symbolic, place and time than Rio+20 to take stock of where we stand, and to renew our collective efforts to ensure that forests remain a central part of ‘The Future We Want’ in the decades ahead.

In 2009, in the build-up to the Copenhagen climate summit, G20 leaders pledged US$4.5 billion in ‘interim REDD+ finance’ for the 2010-2012 period, to assist rainforest countries in their efforts to reduce deforestation. The PRP has monitored progress made with this funding to date and noted significant achievements, both in the context of bilateral ‘payment-for-performance’ partnerships (such as those made between the Governments of Brazil, Indonesia and Guyana with Norway), and with the multilateral funds (such as the World Bank’s Forest Carbon Partnership Facility, and UN-REDD). But the PRP also notes the difficulties which have been faced by donor and rainforest countries alike in the procurement, coordination and disbursement of the majority of these funds to date, and suggests ways in which these can (and must) be overcome in the immediate future. In the absence of an overarching global climate agreement until 2020, the PRP now seeks to draw attention to the substantial additional funding required for the 2013-2020 period, in order to ensure that REDD+ efforts continue to bear fruit and to effect the necessary transitions at scale in rainforest countries.

Since 2009, the PRP has also sought to contribute to research, dialogue and the formation of public-private partnerships seeking to enhance agricultural productivity, in sustainable and resilient ways, without causing further deforestation. This work is founded on the growing evidence base concerning both the status of agriculture and land use change as the world’s foremost driver of deforestation, and the growing number of case studies which show that a decoupling of increased agricultural production and deforestation can in principle be achieved.

In 2012, the PRP commissioned three regional studies to assess the economics, enabling policies and financial mechanisms necessary in key forest and commodity jurisdictions in rainforest countries, in order to address this challenge. The studies address the case of soya and livestock in Mato Grosso, Brazil; palm oil in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia; and cocoa and palm oil in the Eastern and Western Regions of Ghana. The three studies coincide in the need to generate upfront public finance, both from national governments and international donors, in order to enable farmers to shift from their current ‘business-as-usual’ practices, to more socially and environmentally sustainable ones. These should be combined with improved extension services, rural development policies and subsidised loans for farmers, over the mid- to long-term. But they also stress the need for this decoupling to take place within the broader context of jurisdiction-led land use planning, improved forest governance, support for forest and Indigenous Peoples, and the enforcement of forest legislation. A series of potential pilot projects and policy recommendations are put forward for each region (the full studies and a synthesis report with key findings are available in PRP’s October 2011 report), with further such work to be commissioned in the year ahead.

The PRP will be present at many of the side events on forests at Rio+20, including IIED’s Fair Ideas, the CIFOR Forests Round Table, and the Avoided Deforestation Partners side event on 21st June. There is much inspiring and impressive work being done, and we hope that Rio+20 will provide a strong boost to these efforts going forward.
Heads of State:
zero deforestation is what the world needs

Renata Camargo and Martin Kaiser
Greenpeace

Twenty years ago, Rio failed to deliver a Forests convention. Since then, the UN process on forests has failed to achieve much, and at the Rio+20 Preparatory Committee (Prep Com), even the Chair of the ‘splinter group’ was not impressed. He noted on Thursday that only three paragraphs on forests would be ‘embarrassing’ as an outcome. The exact number of paragraphs for agreement is not our issue, but we do agree that, as it currently stands, the Rio+20 text on forests is an embarrassment. What the world needs, an agreement by Heads of State to end deforestation globally by 2020, is not even on the table.

Listening to the negotiations during the Prep Com you could get the impression that, either, all is well with the global environment, or the situation is so desperate that governments are simply at the mercy of the corporations driving and benefitting from forest destruction.

Only a few weeks ago, the President of Brazil opened the Amazon up to destruction, by agreeing to substantial parts of a new Forest Code. This is a tragedy, as the new Forest Code will fatally undermine recent progress made in reducing Brazilian deforestation. The Amazon contains over half the world’s remaining tropical forests and a quarter of all terrestrial plant and animal species, many of which are found nowhere else, with others still being discovered. Roughly one fifth of the world’s fresh water comes from the Amazon, and the rain it generates supports agriculture as far as the Midwest United States.

Nearly 24 million people inhabit the Amazon, including about 383,000 indigenous people from 180 different groups who depend on the forest for their survival. Our diets and livelihoods are in a large part based on foods and materials originating from the Amazon, as are many medicines, including numerous cancer treatment drugs.

Therefore, civil society organisations in Brazil launched a citizen initiative to force the Brazilian parliament to discuss a zero deforestation law. The Brazilian Landless Movement (MST), the Catholic Church, and Greenpeace have been collecting signatures for the citizen initiative at the People’s Summit. The only tolerable rate of deforestation is zero. Brazil must decide whether it wants to be known as the nation leading the path to sustainable prosperity and zero deforestation, or as a nation that showed deforestation could be halted, but failed to do so simply to cater to short term special interests.

Forests maintain ecological systems that are essential for all life on Earth. Furthermore, forests play a vital role in stabilising the Earth’s climate, by capturing and storing large amounts of carbon and allowing humans and other species to better adapt to the impacts of climate change. These are all good reasons for Heads of State to tell their negotiators to stop dragging their feet and commit to zero deforestation by 2020.

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More info
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Marine litter: preventing our oceans from becoming dumps

Litter is found in all the world’s oceans and seas, even in remote areas far from human contact and the obvious sources of the problem. With an increase in world population of 26%, in tourism of 90% and in plastics use of 130% over the last 20 years, the amount of waste ending up in our oceans is increasing, whether accidental or intentional. Causes are both cultural and multi-sectoral, resulting from poor practices in managing solid wastes, a lack of infrastructure, insufficient understanding among the public about the potential consequences of its actions, inadequate legal and enforcement systems and a shortage of financial resources.

- Land-based sources include: wastes released from dumpsites near the coast or river banks; the littering of beaches; tourism and recreational use of the coasts; fishing industry activities; and shipping yards.

- Sea-based sources include: abandoned, lost, or discarded fishing gear; shipping activities; and legal and illegal dumping.

All this can lead to loss of biodiversity, ecosystem functions and services; and cause serious economic losses for coastal communities, tourism, shipping, fishing, and fish farming. Estimates for marine litter-related damage to marine industries for the 21 economies of the Asia-Pacific rim only are US$1.26bn per annum.

Improving national waste management programmes not only helps reduce the volume of waste in the marine environment and its subsequent impacts, but can also bring real economic benefits. In the Republic of Korea, a policy of Extended Producer Responsibility has been enforced on packaging (paper, glass, iron, aluminium and plastic) and specific products (batteries, tyres, lubricating oil) since 2003. This initiative has resulted in the recycling of 6 million metric tonnes of waste between 2003 and 2007, increasing the country’s recycling rate by 14% and creating economic benefits equivalent to US$1.6 billion.

Reducing and controlling marine litter in the world’s oceans is a significant but achievable challenge

However, one community or one country acting in isolation will not be the answer – addressing this trans-boundary problem requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving international organizations, governments at national and sub-national levels, industry, non-governmental organizations. It is by bringing all these players together that we can truly make a difference.

Clearly, marine litter is a global problem and mitigation actions should be developed around a global framework, coordinated at the regional level and implemented at the national level through development and implementation of national action plans or strategies.

The ‘Honolulu Strategy – a global framework for the prevention and management of marine debris’, developed by the UNEP and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA, U.S.) with input from marine litter stakeholders from all over the world, is a worldwide applicable tool which does not supplant or supersede the activities of national authorities, municipalities, industry, international organizations, or other stakeholders; rather, it provides a focal point for improved collaboration and coordination.

A Partnership approach...

In 2003, in response to this global challenge, UNEP’s Regional Seas Programme and the Coordinating Office for the Global Programme of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (GPA) embarked on the Global Initiative on Marine Litter, which saw the development of 12 Regional Action Plans and various publications and guidelines.

As mandated by the Manila Declaration adopted by 65 Governments and the European Commission in January 2012, UNEP GPA invites Governments and partners to join the establishment of a Global Partnership on Marine Litter aiming to protect human health and the global environment through the reduction and management of marine litter. This can be done through e.g. the promotion and implementation of the Honolulu Strategy and the related Honolulu Commitment. Knowledge management, information sharing and networking amongst stakeholders will be facilitated through an online platform.

A side event, led by UNEP GPA, will share lessons learned from partnership approaches, discuss the scope and activities of a global partnership, provide an opportunity for stakeholders to share commitments, and launch the Global Partnership on Marine Litter.

To find out more, join us at UNEP’s Side event.

SIDE EVENT: Marine Litter: Preventing our Oceans from becoming dumps
DATE: Monday, 18 June
TIME: 10:00 am to 11:45 am
VENUE: Banco de Caixa, auditorium, Avenida, Almirante Barroso, 25 Subsolo, in the centre of Rio de Janeiro (Metro: Carioca Station)
Leonardo Boff criticises the UN’s Rio+20 position during the Earth Charter event

Evelyn Araripe
Youth News Agency and Rio+YOU

In the first day of the People’s Summit, and during the launch of the Earth Charter Brazilian network, Leonardo Boff strongly criticised the United Nation’s stance at Rio+20. “The theme for Rio+20 is the future we do not want, and the future they want is to take us to the edge of the abyss. They don’t have any positive messages for the future we want”, declared the writer and theologian to an audience of more than 500 people at the Plenary 5 in Aterro do Flamengo.

Boff went even further, stating that “one of the main flaws of the UN documents is that they never take into account the reality and threats to life systems and humanity. They are more worried about saving financial systems, in saving Greece, Spain and economic capitals”. Amongst applause, the theologian conveyed his worry about the future of humanity, what he calls “matters of live or death”. He concluded saying, “we are already late and we have no time for mistakes, because there is no time to correct our errors. This time the entire planetary system as a whole is under threat”.

On the Earth Charter, Boff quoted some of the paragraphs and stated that he feels it has not been as widely disseminated as he would have wished, but argues that this is because the Charter “is not digestible for our current society, mainly from the point of view of the capitalist system”. He stressed the document was born as the largest public consultation in the history of human kind and added “the Charter requires many changes, but designs the kind of humanity we want, which is the fundamental goal of the Earth Charter”.

We can't wait another 20 years

Verena Gschnell and Matteo Conci
Youth News Agency and Rio+YOU

“I want to ask: Until when? We are not going to desist. Our objective is our land. I’ll die on my land. We want our children and grandchildren to live on Mato Grosso, our land”. These are the words of Cacique Damiao Paridzane, the head of the tribe Xavante.

Today, after 20 years, he came to the People’s Summit in Rio de Janeiro with 50 community-members to claim for his land, Maraiwatsédé and to implore the Brazilian government to give the land back in the power of the indigenous people.

This fight began in 1966 when the Xavante community was expelled by the Brazilian Military from Mato Grosso, their land. The first success of the campaign was achieved during the 1992 Rio conference: the Brazilian government and the Chief Executive of AGIP, the Italian Oil company that has bought big areas of the territory, promised that after the Summit they would give the land back to the indigenous tribes. The promise not was kept. Agip has restituted the land, but only 10% of the whole area came back to the Xavante.

In twenty years nothing has changed. The small area that the Xavante were given is not only too small for their living, but it is seriously damaged, so that their lifestyles there as farmers seems almost impossible to maintain. Land destruction is caused by huge soya production and cow farming. The land holds almost no trees, which affects animal wildlife, and the water is badly polluted.

On the discussion panel at the People’s Summit anthropologists, members of partner associations, government members, and the actor Marcos Palmeiras (who followed this issue since 1978 and has lived with the Xavante for quite some time) participated. To raise awareness, Marcos Palmeiras made television programmes on the issue, followed by a movie. All of the interviewed tribe leaders have been killed in the last years. He says: “There are many indigenous communities that are living the same destiny. After so many years it is really urgent to stop stealing and give the land back to the indigenous. For this reason we are here today talking to you.”

About

Viração Educomunicação and Rio+YOU are the world’s largest youth-led news agency covering all events in Rio de Janeiro. Around 80 young journalists, designers, editors and photographers are report on everything that happens in the Youth Blast, Social Entrepreneurs’ Forum, Rio+20, People’s Summit, side events and demonstrations. www.rioplusyou.org #rioyouthagency
One Planet Living company Kingfisher rises to Rio+20 challenge with global commitment to 100% sustainable timber sourcing by 2020

Nick Folland
Kingfisher, and BioRegional One Planet Living programme liaison

Twenty years ago, at an AGM in the UK we were asked where our wood came from. We were told ‘if you don’t know then you don’t care’. We did not know at that time but we did care and we set out to prove it.

Last year, B&Q, our largest operating company in the UK, selling more than 15,000 wood products, became the first retailer of its size to know that the wood in all its products comes from proven well-managed sources. Within our One Planet Home range – part of our collaboration with the entrepreneurial sustainability company BioRegional – B&Q has one of the largest chains of custody certifications in the world, enabling the traceability of all the wood it sells, from forest to shop floor. B&Q is committed to ever-increasing sustainability and to becoming a One Planet company, which will see it massively reduce its environmental impacts across a range of issues, including carbon, water and biodiversity.

We know B&Q’s wood products are all independently verified, responsibly sourced and from either, proven well-managed forests, or recycled materials. It means people can trust that B&Q is doing the right thing and can buy their wood products in confidence. At the same time, our two French companies Castorama and Brico Depot, have been recognised in an independent ranking by WWF in France, as two of their top suppliers for sustainable timber in the country.

Kingfisher is the world’s third largest home improvement retailer with around 950 stores in eight countries. Our businesses globally require a forest the size of Switzerland every year to meet all our timber requirements. As a leader in sustainability and as announced today at BioRegional’s event at the Rio+20 Conference, Kingfisher is making a voluntary commitment – in tandem with the ambitious One Planet Living global alliance – to build on B&Q’s success and extend our programme to all Kingfisher companies. We will deliver 100% responsibly sourced timber and paper in all our operations globally by 2020.

It’s a tall order, but as B&Q has already reached the milestone and is making excellent progress, we know we can and must achieve it with our other operating companies and new markets. People and businesses are genuinely concerned about deforestation, but are not necessarily sure what it is they personally can do about it. Kingfisher can solve that problem for its customers, by making it easy for them to choose the right wood. We believe by taking a leadership position we can help create demand for responsibly sourced wood world-wide.

Sustainable Development Dialogue Days: sustainable development as an answer to the economic and financial crises

Rina Kuusipalo
SustainUS

Luis Nassif, the moderator, started the Sustainable Development Dialogue on “Sustainable Development as an answer to the economic and financial crises” by recounting that the view of the economic model as scientific truth has come to an end with this financial crisis, and that now we have returned to discussing the political economy. A big part of this rethinking is, he said, employing new yardsticks or indicators of progress.

Yilmaz Akyuz from Turkey (Chief Economist at the South Centre) stressed that “unless action is taken on the financial front, very little can be done on the sustainable front.” He said financial globalization is one of the main causes of aggravating inequality. What is needed, he said, is a “complete overhaul” of the international financial system, done through a UN-led international task force and an international conference that focuses on finance for sustainable development.
Sustainable Development Dialogue Days: unemployment, decent work and migration

Victoria Johnson
nef

“Every country, developed, developing all are suffering from the pain of unemployment. This kind of pain differs from one country to the next, but we hear the expression the same: jobs, jobs, jobs” said Nana-Fosu Randall (Voices of African Mothers, Ghana) in the inaugural Sustainable Development Dialogues session.

The session focussed on unemployment, decent work and migration – particularly fitting given the impact of the recent financial crisis on the labour markets. In almost all their statements, the panellists representing a diverse array of nations and backgrounds, cited the growing numbers of unemployed, specifically youth, as a key challenge for the Rio+20 process. But, exploitation of workers, and the failure of the current economic paradigm were also highlighted as undermining a sustainable labour market.

Daniel Iliescu (National Union of Students, Brazil) argued that investment in people was the main pillar for building a sustainable future, while Nana-Fosu Randall delivered a moving statement about her experience of youth unemployment in Africa and its relationship to civil unrest: “I am here today to beg, to ask our leaders they should look at our youth today and create some kind of jobs, some kind of education, some kind of training” implored Randall, “so that they can have better lives instead of being a warzone all the time.”

Dr. Lu Hulin (Beijing University) called for the social protection of labour: “of the 10 issues,” said Hulin, “the most important is the social protection of labour. In China, capital is abundant but labour hasn’t been protected...the free flow of capital has eaten away at the social protection of labour.”

In addition to the empowerment and involvement of women, Sharan Burrows (ITUC) and Carmen Helena Ferreira Foro (National Confederation of Agricultural Workers, Brazil) called for a new economic paradigm. Dr. James K. Galbraith (Texas University) suggested a principle of for such an economy: “not too much, not too little, but an appropriate amount in the distribution and use of resources over all”, in addition to calling for the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining, and need to safeguard migrant workers and environmental migrants. Deborah Wince-Smith (Council on Competitiveness) and Peter Bakker (World Business Council for Sustainable Development) called for governments and civil society to work with businesses to create and transform jobs.

Following a lively, but brief discussion on refining the ten recommendations an electronic vote took place:

• 78 % of the audience voted for Governments to commit to a ‘Social Protection and Decent Work for all goal by 2030 including access to health, unemployment, ill health, maternity, child protection and disabled people’.

• The panel voted for ‘compel national governments to respect the human rights of migrants in temporary foreign worker programmes’ with the addendum that this should be revised to include all migrants and environmental migrants.

• The online public vote selected ‘Put education in the core of the sustainable development goals agenda’ and the session determined that this would be merged with ensuring jobs and workplaces meet minimum safety and health standards.”
ECO Corner
ECO Corner is produced by the cooperative efforts of Climate Action Network members at the Rio+20 Conference

Civil society participation is an asset not a burden

There is great concern among civil society at the glacial progress of the discussions in the first week on civil society participation in environmental decision-making. Some countries will not consider text on civil society participation unless it simply repeats or even undermines language from 10 or 20 years ago. This is not acceptable.

Twenty years ago, Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration (access to information, public participation and access to justice) recognised that the best environmental decisions are made with the involvement of the public, such as NGOs, women, trade unions, youth and others. In light of this, it is extremely disheartening and worrying to see that even general preambular references to civil society participation were hotly contested in the first week. Civil society groups came forward with a range of textual proposals aimed at advancing this area. For example, we would like to see the specific reference to securing active public participation in international sustainable development processes in the section dealing with the functions of a sustainable development high level political forum remain in the text. The mandate for UNEP should include legal frameworks for implementing and building upon the Bali Guidelines on Principle 10 and there should be clear language on implementing Principle 10 at the national level.

Civil society has a huge range of expertise and experience that adds real value when we are able to participate in decision-making at the local, national and international levels. Our ability to participate also ensures the legitimacy of decision making and helps translates decisions into real world outcomes. This is the only way to genuinely achieve sustainable development. In many ways civil society groups are the best allies parties have at the international level, especially developing country parties, whom we often support by providing increased capacity and advocacy efforts.

Yesterday, Algeria has received the fossil of the day on behalf of G77 for opposing language in relation to effective civil society engagement. We know that only a very small number of G77 members and other countries are not supportive of civil society participation. The other member states of the UN should not allow this to prevent the civil society participation that is sorely needed in the process for sustainable development.

The reaffirmation of human rights, phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies, and oceans – the text as a whole will not be a sufficient answer to the multitude of crises that we face.

This campaign urges the Government of Brazil, the UNCSD Secretary General, and all Member States to stop negotiating their short-term national agendas and to urgently agree on transitional actions for global sustainable progress. We urge the 99% of the world to stand up for the future we really want, not this one, imposed by a few: the 1% negotiators and their elite constituencies.

The future we don’t want
ANPED, the Northern Alliance for Sustainability

The new negotiation text proposed by the Brazilian government is positive on many points, but clearly not good enough on environmental limits. While efficiency is quoted 14 times and economic growth 20 times, there is not a single word on sufficiency or planetary boundaries or limits. While there are certainly some good parts, the overall level of ambition is still weak. In response, ANPED, with the support of many other civil society organisations, has launched an e-petition ‘the future we don’t want’.

Today, we will bring this to the attention of the European Commission delegates and the press. The text makes not a single mention of vital issues such as environmental justice, social innovation or a high-level representative for future generations. While the text is strong in parts – such as the paragraphs on the Sustainable Development Goals, the reaffirmation of human rights, phasing out of fossil fuel subsidies, and oceans – the text as a whole will not be a sufficient answer to the multitude of crises that we face.

This campaign urges the Government of Brazil, the UNCSD Secretary General, and all Member States to stop negotiating their short-term national agendas and to urgently agree on transitional actions for global sustainable progress. We urge the 99% of the world to stand up for the future we really want, not this one, imposed by a few: the 1% negotiators and their elite constituencies.

More info
Please sign and share the ‘future we don’t want’ e-petition: www.ipetitions.com/petition/the-future-we-dont-want
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Venue</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Organisers</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>09:00 - 2:00</td>
<td>Sheraton Rio Hotel and Resort, Avenue Niemeyer</td>
<td>UNEP-Bright Moon Joint Event: Get Together in Rio-Summit on Green Economy and Sustainable Development</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>09:30 - 11:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-3</td>
<td>Rights of Nature - the Foundation for Sustainability</td>
<td>Global Exchange</td>
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<tr>
<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>10:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>Second space in UNEP Pavilion</td>
<td>Nutrients For Food or Pollution? The Choice is Ours</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
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<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>11:30 - 13:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-10</td>
<td>WWF: Sustainable And Affordable Access To Energy-From Field To Policy</td>
<td>World Wide Fund for Nature European Office</td>
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<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>10:35 - 15:45</td>
<td>Barra Arena, Room UN6</td>
<td>Workshop #2- Brazilian and Other Latin America Civil Society</td>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
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<tr>
<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>11:30 - 13:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-6</td>
<td>An ethical framework for global governance</td>
<td>Earth Charter International</td>
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<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>11:30 - 13:00</td>
<td>RioCentro P3-6</td>
<td>Banking as if the future matters - Making the change from short term profit to long term prosperity</td>
<td>Norwegian Forum for Development and Environment</td>
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<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>12:30 - 14:00</td>
<td>UNEP Pavilion</td>
<td>Transition to Sustainability: The Inclusive Wealth Report</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>13:30 - 15:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-2</td>
<td>From Production To Consumption - Towards A Sustainable Food System</td>
<td>Millennium Institute</td>
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<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>13:30 - 15:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-6</td>
<td>Get mad and do something about it! Youth as initiators for change</td>
<td>Peace Child International</td>
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<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>14:00 - 19:00</td>
<td>Rio Pavilion, Athletes’ Park</td>
<td>National SD Councils</td>
<td>Stakeholder Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>15:30 - 17:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-3</td>
<td>Launch of report &quot;Sustainable development for the 21st Century&quot;</td>
<td>Division for Sustainable Development (UNDESA)</td>
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<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>15:30 - 17:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-6</td>
<td>Tax justice: key to sustainable development?</td>
<td>Christian Aid</td>
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<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>15:30 - 17:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-11</td>
<td>Dialogue of Chinese, European and South American Civil Society Rio+20</td>
<td>Collective RIO+20</td>
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<td>17/6/12</td>
<td>15:30 - 17:00</td>
<td>UN2, Barra Arena</td>
<td>Severn Cullis-Suzuki keynote address</td>
<td>WeCanada</td>
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<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>17:00 - 17:30</td>
<td>RioCentro T-9</td>
<td>Imagine All the People: Advancing a Planetary Movement</td>
<td>The Widening Circle</td>
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<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>17:30 - 19:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-2</td>
<td>Another work is possible: a trade union contribution to Sustainable Development</td>
<td>International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) on behalf of the Workers and Trade Union Major</td>
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<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>09:00 - 12:30</td>
<td>RioCentro Pavilion 6, room 1</td>
<td>Workshop #3- Global Major Groups Community</td>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>09:30 - 11:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-9</td>
<td>Sharing solutions for a sustainable planet</td>
<td>International Institute for Environment and Development (IIEED)</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>09:30 - 21:00</td>
<td>RioCentro P3-3</td>
<td>Open Dialogue on the Future We Chose</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
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<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>11:00 - 12:30</td>
<td>Windsor Barra Hotel, room: queluz VII</td>
<td>Women’s Empowerment Principles: Local Opportunities to Turn Principles into Progress</td>
<td>UN Women</td>
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<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>12:00 - 13:00</td>
<td>UNEP Pavilion</td>
<td>How research can inform the green economy transition – Discussion tables with EU-funded project officers</td>
<td>UN Women</td>
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<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>13:00 - 14:00</td>
<td>UNEP Pavilion</td>
<td>Natural Capital and Economic Development: Bridging or Breaking</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
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<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>15:30 - 17:00</td>
<td>RioCentro T-2</td>
<td>Peasants Reclaiming our Future with Food Sovereignty and Agroecology</td>
<td>LA VIA CAMPESINA - International Peasant Movement</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>14:00 - 17:00</td>
<td>UNEP Pavilion</td>
<td>UNEP-SEE Joint Event: China Going Green – Forum on Civil Society and Green Economy in China</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>14:00 PM – 15:30 PM</td>
<td>Windsor Barra Hotel, Alvorada I</td>
<td>Gender Equality for Sustainability</td>
<td>UN Women, UN Global Compact</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>17:00 – 19:00</td>
<td>UNEP Pavilion</td>
<td>Achieving Social and Environmental Goals through Sustainable Public Procurement</td>
<td>UNEP</td>
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<tr>
<td>18/6/12</td>
<td>17:30 – 19:00</td>
<td>UN5 room in Arena da Barra (Barra da Tijuca)</td>
<td>Towards the constitution of a “Supranational Democratic Climate Authority” An open roundtable from Rio+20 (Sustainable Development) to Doha (Climate Change) 2012!</td>
<td>World Democratic Governance project association, WDGpa</td>
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</table>
After being postponed by three hours, finally, at 3pm, the Brazilian government took the stage and was handed over the brief to run the remainder of the Rio+20 conference. Announcing that there would be a new text introduced to Member States, the Brazilian Ambassador also laid out the plans for the coming days.

The discussions that are taking place in earnest, to achieve consensus on the text, will not be following the same procedures that have hitherto been guiding proceedings. Instead, bracket politics will be replaced with open consultations that will be overseen and led by facilitators; whose the responsibility will be to draw together the views of each group, and work these into the Brazilian text.

The first round of groups – IFSD, Means of Implementation, Sustainable Development Goals, and Oceans – met to begin discussions under the new Brazilian-led process. Other groups covering the remaining topics in the Sunday and Monday sessions will be announced in due course. The plan will be to have a text ready to present to Heads of State on Wednesday. The deadline will be set as Monday evening, but Tuesday will no doubt be used as a buffer day, should more time be needed.

The decision to stop using the screens to edit and play with brackets will give the Brazilian facilitators a lot more scope to deliver a higher level document. This move shows clear political intent and will enable them to play a stronger leadership role than the Bureau was able to do. Ministers are now arriving, so expect to see them in huddles over the next few days clearing through the disagreements and creating a more coherent text – hopefully the one that we have all been waiting for.

Close to 20,000 members of civil society pre-registered for Rio+20, a huge manifestation for, and belief in, the intergovernmental system. Major Groups from 170 countries have come to listen to what is happening in the negotiations rooms, to learn and work with global democracy and sustainable development. The nations of the world instilled, from the beginning of the Rio process, high hopes for the outcome on the General Assembly resolution calling for Rio+20, hopes that manifested a belief in democracy – ‘The Future We Want’ is a future for its people.

But the actions of delegates have often belied their initial intentions. Ever since the ‘informals’ began in January this year, language around the rights of Major Groups has been weakened. And yet no language on Major Groups was new; in fact it has all reflected agreed UN language based on accepted practice.

The institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD) is in a difficult state at the moment. Several options are on the table. Delegates have made tremendous progress on the functions. But language on Major Groups was bracketed. One IFSD proposal from the original text could pulverise sustainable development and relegate Major Groups into mere spectators to decision-making processes. Another proposal would allow for a structure that would enrich the UN.

Brazil has proposed a compromise text, which incorporates all paragraphs agreed ‘ad ref’. Clean language is delivered. A high level forum is proposed. A few functions are still missing, and it is not clear where the new body will report to. But this is something to work with, and it is promising. It can be made stronger.

60-70% of all UN decisions and programmes are implemented in the field by civil society and business stakeholders. Now is the time for all Major Groups to be vigilant and to guard and improve language on stakeholder engagement and IFSD. Now is the time to take seriously the words that Secretary General of the first Earth Summit, Maurice Strong, ended his speech with on Friday 15th June 1992, at the prestigious commemoration of the Conference: “In the final analysis it is the people that count and make the difference”. That is the spirit of ‘The Future We Want’. That is the spirit of Rio+20. That is bringing the legacy of Rio 1992 to Rio+20 and beyond.

Outreach is made possible by the support of