

October 31, 2011

Dear UNCSD 2012 Bureau Members,

Re: Input for Zero Draft compilation document

It is with great pleasure that we submit ideas and recommendations for inclusion in the compilation document for your consideration that will serve as basis for the preparation of the Zero Draft. Specifically, we ask you to include the following five issues:

1. Committing nation-states and the United Nations to Principle #10 of the Rio Declaration on access to information, transparency, public participation and access to justice;
2. Reflecting that the overarching goal of a green economy should be defined in the context of sustainable patterns of consumption and production that are built on a fair and socially just economic system that meets the needs of all people and respects animal welfare within the ecological carrying capacity of the planet;
3. Measuring what matters: moving beyond GDP;
4. Getting the prices right: eliminating fossil fuel subsidies and pricing carbon; and
5. Making trade fair: committing to public procurement of fair trade certified products

We are making this submission on behalf of the partners of the Canadian Earth Summit Coalition, a self-organized, independent and informal civil society network of non-governmental, non-profit, academic and research organizations created to push for Canadian leadership at the Rio+20 conference, as well as reach out to Canadians on the important question of sustainability through the coalition's bilingual public engagement initiative, "We Canada". The initiative's website, www.earthsummit.ca serves as a venue to share innovative ideas, actions and policy recommendations with a wider audience; to promote Canadian initiatives organized in the context of the conference; and to gather voices and amplify the existing movement around sustainability.

We would like to take this opportunity to express our deep disappointment for not having been consulted by the Federal Government of Canada on the development of its own submission to the Zero Draft on behalf of all Canadians. This lack of consultation goes against a long-standing Canadian tradition dating back to the Rio Earth Summit in 1992 of engaging with civil society on important issues including sustainable development.

In the lead-up to, and during, the UN World Summit on Sustainable Development in 2002, for example, the Canadian Government established an exemplary public participation and engagement process¹, which contributed to the determination of Canada's areas of focus at the Summit. Since Rio, Canada has been one of the few UN-member states to include civil society representatives as part of its official delegation to the UN Commission on Sustainable

¹ http://www.canada2002earthsummit.gc.ca/canada_at_wssd/preparations_e.cfm



Development; we are concerned that Canada will no longer pursue this valuable form of collaboration with Canadian civil society, particularly since we have just learned that the Federal Government of Canada has declined core funding to the Canadian Environmental Network (RCEN) after having provided such critical support for 34 years. The RCEN has been a key stakeholder in ensuring civil society representation on delegations for UN events. We are advocating for the reinstatement of RCEN funding and for a commitment to include a civil society and youth representative on the Canadian delegation to Rio +20.

The attached note details the ideas that the Canadian Earth Summit Coalition is putting forth to the United Nations. In addition to some comments more general in nature that we will be making, such as ensuring that the green economy is defined along the lines of sustainable consumption and production patterns and includes social justice and wellbeing considerations, we emphasize three specific policy areas that we feel require particular attention and that should be featured in a green economy's roadmap or framework for action:

- **“Measuring what matters: Beyond GDP”:** Complementing the ubiquitous gross domestic product (GDP) with full-cost accounting, measures of capital stock depletion, and well-being indicators.
- **“Getting the prices right: Eliminating fossil fuel subsidies and implementing carbon pricing”:** Eliminating fossil fuel market-distorting subsidies and putting a price on carbon by implementing an ecological tax reform (taxing the “bads”, not the “goods”). Carbon pricing should also be based on eight principles outlined below.
- **“Fair Trade procurement policies”:** For guidelines pertaining to cotton uniforms, food items, and beverage products which bear the Fairtrade Certified Mark² as part of green procurement and sustainable development strategies.

We look forward to working with you in the coming months, and would like to emphasize our commitment to making Rio+20 the success and historical turning point that it deserves to be.

Respectfully yours,

Aleksandra Nasteska,
National Co-Director

and

Marie-Pierre Daigle,
National Co-Director

² A full list of products can be found on the Fairtrade International website:
<http://www.fairtrade.net/products.0.html>

Expectations for the outcome of Rio+20

The Canadian Earth Summit Coalition expects that the UN Conference on Sustainable Development will lead to:

- A bold vision of a sustainable future for humanity that will inspire people from around the world – a future we want.
- A short politically-binding outcome document that includes an appendix of countries' own commitments to sustainable development, including the further implementation of existing documents, including Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, with provisions for monitoring, compliance and reporting.
- A green economies' roadmap that sets out clear, mutually-agreed upon sustainable development goals and targets (to complement and build on the Millennium Development Goals) accompanied by a timeline to undertake the great global transition to sustainability.

General comments on the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

The Canadian Earth Summit Coalition puts forth the following remarks on the green economy:

- The concept of the “green economy” should not replace “sustainable development”; although greening economies plays an important role in achieving sustainable development, current definitions of a green economy ignore or gloss over the central questions of fairness, social justice and the rights of both humans and non-humans.
- The overarching goal of the green economy should be defined in the context of sustainable patterns of consumption and production that are built on a fair and socially just economic system that meets the needs of all people and respects animal welfare within the ecological carrying capacity of the planet.
- A green economy calls us to:
 - Make sustainability a political priority
 - Think in terms of systems, and act on the high leverage points (structures and mindsets)
 - Develop a bold, new economic vision that plans for the long term and provides for future generations
 - Live within safe ecological margins, and redefine our relationship to the natural world and to each other
 - Address unjust disparities of wealth and income
 - Prioritize meeting the needs of the world's poor (in both high- and low-income countries) while simultaneously reducing the unsustainable Ecological Footprint of the world's rich along a global framework of 'contraction and convergence'
 - Redefine prosperity in more than simply economic and consumptive terms, and adopt new measures of progress and wellbeing
 - Recognize that a country cannot “go at it alone”, and that reciprocity and cooperation is a key pillar of global wellbeing



- Examples of specific, high-leverage policies to be implemented for a green economy:
 - Instituting a socially fair carbon tax or equitable cap-and-trade system
 - Phasing out of subsidies and investments for unsustainable, inhumane systems
 - Freeing up the length of the working day, week and year to reflect a work-life balance that promotes well-being
 - Reforming our banking system in support of a larger diversity of community-based savings, lending and investment
 - Putting a stop to urban sprawl through increased densification in existing urban centres
 - Discouraging car use, especially in urban areas, and investing heavily in efficient and comfortable public transportation options and self-propelled infrastructure (i.e. car-free spaces)
 - Retrofitting existing buildings to a minimum of PassivHaus norms
 - Implementing choice editing to remove unsustainable options from the market place by industry and government
 - Maximizing public purchases through green and fair-trade procurement
 - Reforming the World Trade Organization so that it serves to promote fair trade

Three overarching policy recommendations around which UN-member States should develop targets and timelines

The Canadian Earth Summit Coalition would like to highlight three overarching and cross-cutting policy areas that it feels need to take centre stage at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development:

1) The adoption of new measures of progress and well-being to measure social and ecological progress towards sustainability:

- It is time to “measure what matters”, which means complementing the ubiquitous gross domestic product (GDP) with full-cost accounting, measures of capital stock depletion, and indicators of well-being.

The development of a green economy that is sustainable and works toward eradicating poverty demands that nations move beyond simply measuring GDP, as called for in Section IV, Chapter 40 in Agenda 21. Science-based indicators of progress and development that account for human and environmental well-being will give policy makers more complete data they need to encourage green and sustainable development. They also allow for a deeper understanding of progress, not just in terms of dollars, but also in terms of the quality of life enjoyed, and the health and resiliency of the natural environment

2) The elimination of market-distorting subsidies to all fossil fuels and putting a price on carbon:

- “Getting the prices right” and making the markets work for sustainable development requires, *inter alia*, eliminating fossil fuel market-distorting subsidies and putting a price on carbon by implementing an ecological tax reform. Furthermore, no matter the instruments, a carbon-pricing policy should be:



- 1) Comprehensive, without exemptions
- 2) Nation-wide
- 3) Simple and readily implemented
- 4) Transparent and accountable
- 5) Complemented when a price signal alone is insufficient

The carbon price itself should be:

- 6) Environmentally effective
- 7) Ultimately comparable to that in other countries and
- 8) Predictable but adaptable³

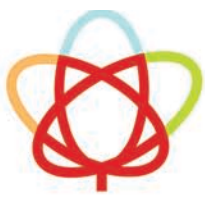
The elimination of harmful subsidies and reflecting true social and ecological costs in the price of goods and services by putting a price on carbon are the starting point and the condition sine qua non to shifting towards a green economy. One of the objectives of the Rio+20 Conference is to secure renewed international political commitment for sustainable development. Countries must show real commitment to making the markets work for sustainable development by using effective levers such as taxes, subsidies and procurement to discourage ecologically damaging activities and promote healthy and socially progressive alternatives. A system that eliminates harmful, market-distorting fossil fuel subsidies and that partly shifts taxation systems from “goods” (i.e. employment) to “bads” (carbon emissions) would constitute a significant step to making the markets work for sustainable development without unnecessarily jeopardizing the economy.

3) The implementation of national sustainable procurement policies that includes sourcing products bearing the Fairtrade Certified Mark:

- Fair Trade procurement guidelines pertaining to cotton uniforms, food, and beverage products need to be included in the traditional government procurement policies, and complement green procurement at the national and sub-national scale.

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation calls on relevant authorities at all levels to “promote public procurement policies that encourage development and diffusion of environmentally sound goods and services” (Ch. III, 19 c.). Rio+20 must go beyond promoting simply “green” procurement, and must include social considerations. Fair Trade procurement runs in concert with the objectives of the Rio+20 Conference as large-scale purchasing of Fair Trade products can lift thousands of producers out of poverty and greatly improve living conditions in farming and artisanal communities around the world. Fair Trade addresses environmental concerns such as soil erosion and climate change while tackling emerging challenges in human trafficking by rooting out child labour.

³ For more information on the principles, see <http://sustainableprosperity.ca/dl4>



CANADIAN
EARTH SUMMIT
COALITION

This submission is supported by the following organizations, partners of the Canadian Earth Summit Coalition:



www.fairtradevancouver.ca



www.oneearthweb.org



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www.davidsuzuki.org



www.wspa.ca



www.villagevancouver.ca



www.mysustainablecanada.org



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