

'Informal-informal' negotiations on the Zero Draft of outcome document.
19 thru 23 March 2012 at UN Hqrs in NYC

KEY MESSAGES OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES FOR RIO + 20

A Side Event: 20 March 2012 - Speaker: Marie-Danielle Samuel, VP, Yachay Wasi

Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon has stated that the Earth Summit of 1992 was a Wake-up Call, but Rio + 20 is a Distress Call.

Agenda 21 resulted from the 1992 Summit. This is a Quote from its Preamble:

*1.1. Humanity stands at a defining moment in history. We are confronted with a perpetuation of disparities between and within nations, a worsening of poverty, hunger, ill health and illiteracy, and the continuing deterioration of the ecosystems on which we depend for our well-being. However, integration of environment and development concerns and greater attention to them will lead to the fulfillment of basic needs, improved living standards for all, better protected and managed ecosystems and a safer, more prosperous future. No nation can achieve this on its own; but together we can - in a global partnership for sustainable development.*¹

Twenty years later, human behavior has not much changed, but environmental concerns have escalated.

Spiritual essence is missing from the original Zero Draft text. Humans are spiritual beings, but modern society actions belie this truth.

In ancient times, thru the ages and still today, First Nations of the world also called Indigenous peoples demonstrated their respect for the Earth in various ways and symbolized this union of the Spirit and the Environment thru their Sacred Sites.

It is this spiritual harmony which must be renewed to inspire and motivate the peoples of the world to take the environmental threat seriously and really try to save the planet.

Yachay Wasi, an Indigenous NGO based in New York City, USA and in Cuzco, Peru, contributed four comments to the Zero Draft in February 2012.

The First and most important comment is the re-evaluation of the three Pillars for Sustainable Development first mentioned in its Preamble.

These three pillars "Economic, Social and Environmental" are also referred in the Secretary-General Hi-Level panel on Global Sustainability² and give priority to the Economy.

The primary concern of Sustainable Development must be the Environment.

In its comments to CSD, Yachay Wasi stressed that the order of priority of these three pillars should be ENVIRONMENTAL, SOCIAL and ECONOMIC.

Interestingly, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in his remarks at the informal General Assembly plenary on the report of his Global Sustainability Hi-Level Panel, in New York on 16 March 2012, does the same !!!

In the 9th Paragraph of his speech, he proclaims::

"...the international institutional architecture needs to be improved. I urge Governments to look at the shortcomings of current bodies and processes, and consider a fresh start through new or reformed arrangements that integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development — environmental, social and economic."

<http://www.un.org/News/Press/docs//2012/sgsm14166.doc.htm>

Additionally, the word Social is vague and should be replaced by Ethical. Spiritual would be more appropriate, but will not be approved.

This opinion of Yachay Wasi does not take away from the Indigenous Peoples Major Group's attempt to include Cultural as a Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development.

Yachay Wasi feels that GREEN ECONOMY has already become a catch phrase used by businesses and advertising regardless of sustainable values of products. It has lost its integrity and should not be associated with Rio+20. The term should be replaced. Economy is not the important word. A fair economy will be a result of sustainable activities.

We do agree with the Indigenous Peoples Major Group comments that the term "GREEN ECONOMIES" be used instead.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) was created in 1972 as the environmental conscience of the United Nations system.³

UNEP capacity should be strengthened and it should become the Specialized Agency for Environment and Sustainable Development.

A Specialized Agency would include enhanced partnerships with local governmental authorities and civil society organizations.

Yachay Wasi supports UNEP as, besides its many years of experience in environmental issues, this Programme has demonstrated its commitment to spirituality in biodiversity issues.

Fora were organized and books were published (i.e. Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity, 1999⁴; Earth and Faith, a Book of Reflection for Action, 2000)³

Last, but not least...

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM should be added as a Priority goal.

Sustainable development goals should include SUSTAINABLE TOURISM as it was discussed and defined at the 7th Session of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development in 1999.

Unfortunately, since then, the ethical aspects of SUSTAINABLE Tourism have been forgotten. Especially, the following one: "If more Indigenous ownership could be developed, the perception of tourism as a foreign-dominated sector would be reduced." (UN Doc. E/CN.17/1999/5/Add.2 Chapt. III Parag.30).

Sustainable tourism, not to be confused with Ecotourism, empowers Indigenous and/or local communities to gradually take control of this rich industry, which currently benefits outside ownerships.

In closing, humanity must re-evaluate its priorities. The United Nations system is in a unique position to lead this transformation. The Earth Summit in 1992 woke up the world.

Rio + 20 Summit must inspire it .

REFERENCES:

¹ Earth Summit Agenda 21 – UN Publications 1992; ² Secretary-General Hi-Level panel on Global Sustainability – UN 30 January 2012; ³ Earth and Faith, A book of Reflection for Action – UNEP 2000; ⁴ Cultural and Spiritual Values of Biodiversity UNEP 1999.