



Nattúruverndarsamtök Íslands

Iceland Nature Conservation Association

Alþingi

Erindi nr. P 140/134

komudagur 14.11.2011

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development at Rio de Janeiro, 4-6 June 2012 - Comments by Iceland Nature Conservation Association

Almost twenty years after the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro mankind still faces enormous threats to the ocean environment, excessive even illegal unreported and unregulated fisheries, ocean acidification as a consequence of global warming, pollution of the marine environment and decline in biological diversity.

Despite the Rio Conventions and numerous other multilateral agreements on sustainable development, climate change is a growing menace to development, to resources, to food security – to the oceans. At the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, 4-6 June, governments must agree to measure to halt further destruction of the environment. In particular the focus must be set on the ocean environment.

Since UNCED in Rio 20 years ago, governments have failed. Furthermore, too many corporations have actively fought against sustainable development. Governments must put an end to energy production with coal and nuclear power. Oil consumption must peak very soon (2015) and toxic chemicals can never be made green.

A Green Agenda for 2012

At Rio in 2012, world leaders need not rewrite the Rio Declaration or Agenda 21. Rather, they must live up to those agreements already made; make a real assessment of progress and honestly account for where the global community has failed. Such an assessment must address the excessive increase in corporate power the world has witnessed since Rio 1992. Sustainable Development Goals should be launched to on the basis of development within planetary limits. The time-horizon for the goals should be no longer than two election periods at the most, to ensure immediate implementation and avoid gaps in the political commitment.

Improved governance

Governments must improve governance, accountability and liability of international environmental institutions and agreements. The UN Environmental Programme should be upgraded to a UN specialized agency status. In order to achieve sustainable development, the world needs a global authority on the environment as well as stronger implementation and enforcement mechanisms.

The world needs corporate accountability and liability. Globalization has created a gap in governance, providing an environment allowing companies to act as they please. In 2002, at the Johannesburg Earth Summit, governments acknowledged the need for global rules for global corporations. At Rio +20, they should agree to develop a legally binding instrument that ensures full liability for any social or environmental damage global corporations cause. Corporations themselves must take full responsibility for their supply chains;

Should agree on a phase-out of environmentally and socially harmful subsidies within this decade, including subsidies to fossil fuels, forest destruction, nuclear power, agrochemicals and other toxics, the meat industry and destructive fishing practises through socially just transition plans;

Should agree to bring the absolute consumption of renewable and non-renewable resources and the impacts of their extraction within planetary limits in a fair and equitable manner.

Clean and safe energy for all

At Rio +20, governments should commit themselves to a 100% renewable future by endorsing a long-term goal of powering the world economy with 100% sustainable renewable energy. More specifically, governments should pursue the most ambitious pathway outlined by the IPCC Special Report on Renewable Energy enabling 80 % of the world's energy needs to be met by renewable energy by 2050. By 2030, the world needs to get 40% of its energy needs from sustainable renewables sources and improve energy efficiency by 50%.

Bridging the Gaps in Oceans Governance and Stopping Overfishing

Gaps in oceans governance are hampering progress on marine protection. This gap must be bridged by a new agreement under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) for the conservation of marine biodiversity and sustainable management of human activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Such an agreement should be based on the precautionary principle and the ecosystem approach and provide

for the establishment and management of marine reserves in areas outside national jurisdiction

Governments should agree to take immediate actions to cut the overcapacity of the world's fishing fleets. At present, the world fishing fleet is able to catch up to 2.5 times the maximum sustainable yield. Yet the cumulative power of the global fleet is still increasing at a rapid rate. Bringing fishing yields to a sustainable level calls for decisive measures to eliminate the excess capacity. Reduction efforts should focus on large-scale vessels and be flanked by ensuring priority access to the resources for small-scale fisheries.

Industrial large-scale fleets using unsustainable fishing techniques using access agreements to exploit the Exclusive Economic Zones of third coastal states should be outlawed because it leaves these coastal states little or no economic and social benefits, but environmental destruction instead.

Implement a global network of Marine Reserves, which is essential to conserve and restore the health and productivity of the oceans and to maintain vital ecosystem services and food security for hundreds of millions of people. At the Johannesburg Earth Summit in 2002, governments agreed to establish networks of Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) by 2012. Yet today MPAs cover less than 6 % of territorial seas and only 0.5 % of areas beyond national jurisdiction. At a time when ocean ecosystems all over the world – including coral reefs, seamounts and other sensitive habitats – may be reaching tipping points, establishing networks of large-scale marine reserves becomes an indispensable tool to building resilience in ocean ecosystems. Conserving 20-30 % of global oceans through a network of MPAs could create a million jobs and sustain a marine fish catch worth US\$70-80 billion/year. Eventually, the global network of marine reserves needs to cover 40% of the oceans

Eliminate Hazardous Chemical Use

Governments should supplement and strengthen the existing commitments by agreeing to a goal of zero discharge of all hazardous substances within one generation, based on the precautionary principle and a preventative approach to chemicals management with the substitution principle at its core and producer responsibility to drive innovation in Green Chemistry and Toxics Use Elimination. This is crucial to rescue and heal our precious waterways and other fresh water sources;

Should agree on a related implementation plan to (a) establish a dynamic priority hazardous substance list for immediate action, compiled from all the existing commitments and treaties and the lists of OECD and the EU, (b) establish intermediate targets, (c) establish a publicly available register of data about discharge

emissions and losses of hazardous substances

Commit to providing adequate resources and frameworks for implementation, including: (a) identify priority substance restrictions, (b) introduce requirements of mandatory audits and planning (c) provisions of technical help and appropriate financial incentives (d) research and support for innovation in green chemistry.

Rio+20 must deliver tangible results for the people and our planet. The transition to a green economy must be fair and equitable, lift people out of poverty, respect planetary limits and secure decent jobs to people. As global climate-damaging emissions need to peak within a few short years, we cannot afford to make insufficient progress for yet another two decades. The time for action is now!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Arni Finnsson', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Arni Finnsson
Managing Director & President