

**Major Groups Statement at the Informal Thematic Debate of the 60th Session of the
UN General Assembly on “Road to Rio+20 and Beyond”
Tuesday, 22 May 2012**

Mr. Chair:

Thank you for the honor of addressing the General Assembly.

My name is Jeffery Huffines, UN representative for CIVICUS: World Alliance for Citizen Participation, and one of the NGO Organizing Partners. I am sharing with you a statement on behalf of all 9 Major Groups.

Following the results of last month’s informals, the Organizing Partners of the Major Groups have been considering a set of common positions that would define for us a successful outcome for Rio+20, the preliminary results of which we would like to share with you at this critical stage of the negotiations.

We believe that there are eight points that are essential for the implementation of sustainable development, and we urge all governments to include them in their Rio+20 commitments. We must:

1. **Renew Leadership** – Leadership at all levels and stages is necessary. This includes the attendance of Heads of State and Government at Rio+20, as well as leadership from Member States in consistently implementing the agreed outcomes at national and local levels.
2. **Ensure the Principle of Non-Regression** – Ensuring that previous commitments - such as the Declaration of Human Rights, Agenda 21, the Rio Principles and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation - are reaffirmed and, more importantly, implemented.
3. **Achieve equity** – Equity and equality between individuals, societies, countries, genders and generations is at the core of sustainable development and must figure as core criteria for prioritization and decision-making at all levels.
4. **Enable Inclusive Participation** – Meaningful participation of all stakeholders, including civil society and the private sector in both the process and in delegations will result in well-informed and more legitimate decisions. Participation includes better access to information and justice.
5. **Improve sustainable development governance** – Essential functions for sustainable development governance include: 1) Political leadership and agenda setting; 2) Ensuring implementation; 3) Enhancing science-policy interface and progress tracking; 4) Strengthening inter-agency coordination; and 5) Enhancing dialogue and participation among civil society, business and other stakeholders.
6. **Establish Sustainable Development Goals** - The world needs a set of universal Development Goals that will focus our efforts in steering the global economy, our national economies and our societies towards a gradual but effective paradigm shift in the horizon of 2030 and beyond.
7. **Guarantee Sound Science as the basis for Decision-Making** – Ensuring policy is developed and implemented on the basis of strong scientific evidence and best-available knowledge is fundamental to sustainable development. However, we must also take into account scientific uncertainty and adhere to the precautionary principle.
8. **Move beyond GDP** – Putting our societies and economies on the right track for

developing alternative metrics to GDP that can promote and measure inclusive human prosperity and planetary well-being over time will be essential to achieving sustainable development.

These are the essential ingredients of success that the Major Groups consider to be among the minimum standards of what the Rio +20 process must deliver.

In conclusion, when reflecting upon the theme of this panel, “the role of the General Assembly in supporting the objective of the conference”, I wish to go on record to express the extreme dismay and concern that all Major Groups felt when the conference registration deadline passed on 20 May without a decision of the General Assembly to specially accredit some 800 new NGOs to the Rio+20 Conference. We wish to express our gratitude for the extraordinary measures that UN DESA took to extend the registration deadline to 27 May, and thank the General Assembly for finally approving the list of new NGOs only yesterday, but it should go without saying that this sorry state of affairs should have never come to pass given the fact that the deadline for these applications was back in February.

We believe that all multilateral actions should be guided by the principles of sustainable development and human rights. Rather than scoring geopolitical points against each other and the Major Groups, we urge Member States to aim high to restore the original aspirations of Rio 1992, and to be ambitious and strive for all that can be achieved when deciding upon the outcomes for Rio+20.

Thank you very much for your attention.