

Towards a Stronger System of International Environmental Governance

International Conference in Berlin, 26 May 2005

Presentation by:

D. Domingo Jimenez Beltran

Spanish Observatory for Sustainability

Ecologic - Institute for International and European Environmental Policy

Pfalzburger Str. 43-44, D – 10717 Berlin, Tel. +49 30 86880-0, Fax +49 30 86880-100

Internet: www.ecologic.de; Email meyer-ohlendorf@ecologic.de ; knigge@ecologic.de

Ladies and gentlemen, dear colleagues,

Please allow me to conduct to you a warmly salute from Minister Cristina Narbona that could not be here today.

This conference is devoted to the reinforcement of International Environmental Governance, while in fact we will be talking about a main building block, Environment, to favour Sustainable Development or Sustainability at Global level and of a main tool to achieve it, Governance.

When talking about Sustainability, or about a happy end for our environmental struggle, Bjorn Stigson said in a conference in Brussels on October 2002, chaired by the then President Prodi, that the challenge at EU level was not technical –the business sector could deliver- that it was political and that the limiting factor was the lack of Institutional capacity.

And Wangari Maathai, our Nobel Price for Peace, and today's keynote speaker repeats continuously that there is no Environment without Democracy. We could say that there is no Sustainability at Global level without Governability or Governance and in particular related to the Environment as the weakest pillar.

-It is first about making the case for reinforced International Governance. The need of it

-It is the about making the case for doing it now. The opportunity of it just now

-And finally it is about making the way. Or just on what we pretend and how to make it happen on the basis of the actual situation.

The case is made

-It was a clear and main call for it in the UNEP Global Ministerial Conference in Malmö in 2000 when asking for an Institutional architecture that has the capacity to effectively address wide-ranging environmental threats in a globalizing world effectively

-It was implicit when agreeing in 2002 on the Johannesburg Implementation Plan and its ambitious goals on water and sanitation, on poverty eradication and related needs to access to energy and in particular to renewable sources.

-And it was the subject of the entire package to reinforce and develop UNEP resulting from the Global Ministerial Forum in Cartagena in 2002.

And above all, the case is made by the continuous increase in the environmental challenges and the accompanying decrease in the capacities to face them and implement global environmental policies,

showing that even under a charismatic and unrepeatable capable leader as Klaus Töpfer, UNEP structure is neither effective nor adaptable/reliable and can not be sustained.

A real change, a qualitative jump or leap-frogging, seems to be required to be up to the Institutional capacities required for the Agenda for Change that we are facing.

And this is more the case when even in the EU, and it is more at global level, the Agenda for Change is made always of one part that calls for "economic growth first", and then accompanied by some sort of Sustainability Strategy to mend the shortcomings related to the environmental and even the social dimension of a more sustainable development.

In the case of the EU, the Agenda for Change is made now of the just renewed Lisbon Socioeconomic Agenda, that concentrates on growth-employment-productivity, and the yet to be reinforced Gothenburg Sustainable Development Strategy, that is supposed to take care of assuring that the socioeconomic development is not at the cost of the lost of natural resources and the degradation of the environment.

We have to repeat that the Environment continues to be the weakest pillar of the Sustainable development at EU and even more at global level, where the push towards a more sustainable globalization weakens by the minute. This lack of Environmental Institutional capacity, this weak Environmental Governance, makes the prospects first for environmental progress and finally for a more sustainable development and globalization process very hopeless.

We got to recognise that the reinforcement of Environmental Governance is a precondition for progress towards a more sustainable globalization process, and therefore it has significant influence on existing priorities related to poverty eradication and even to world stability and security, as we know there are no shortcuts on these issues and it is via more sustainable global processes that we may achieve real and sustained results on these priority issues.

Sustainability may make other policies redundant but unsustainability may make them even worthless and certainly ineffective and inefficient.

So we need to do something

And we got to do it now

Because it is a matter of urgency, but also because the opportunities to do so are building up:

-Because the Millennium goals will this year be reviewed and a strong push for the Environment voice to be heard over the classic development policies will be well understood

-Because a global reform of the UN System will be considered at the next General Assembly of the UN where Governance will be a recurrent argument and Environment and global Sustainability are of growing concern.

So the main question is about how we make the way.

Or just on what we pretend and how to make it happen on the basis of the actual situation.

Let us first built on what seems to be closer to acceptance :

-That UNEP should improve its actual structure, opening to Universal membership its Government Council and also the Global Ministerial Conference, in order to assure policies general ownership and therefore improve acceptance and the actual poor implementation of policies

-And that there should be a clear improvement of UNEP scientific basis, as scientific consensus as shown by the IPCC helps a lot not only to reduce arguments on the nature and impacts of environmental challenges and alternatives ways of action, and therefore improves substantially the decision making and public participation processes, but also because it assures a more efficient allocation of limited research and information resources to focus on what is relevant and of direct use.

Let me mention on this point that the establishment of some regional capacities similar to the European Environmental Agency, to provide the best available information for policy makers and the society in general, as it was considered five years ago with support of the Environment Commissioner and certainly of Klaus Töpfer is an idea not to forget, above all when we see these days that there is not agreement even on how many thousands of square Km. were destroyed last year in the Amazonian. We can not afford these limitations in knowledge.

-And we also recognize generally that we need enhanced capacity to mobilize the required resources, to replenish the existing funds or develop new ones to run the environmental programmes and possibly, as we move more towards the ultimate goal of Sustainable Development, to close the increasing gap North-South.

Maybe the joining forces of a new reinforced UNEP or new UN Environmental capacity, with UNDP and the WB under the paradigm of Sustainable Development/Sustainable Globalization could pay back some dividends in this sense above all when things seem to move to establish this higher and more predictable replenishments of funds

The recent compromise of the EU to reach finally 0,7% in ODA in 2015 is a good sign on the availability of resources while we should not forget the line reopen again by President Chirac at the Davos Forum in 2004 to create some global taxes and as a first experimental step to establish a low 1/10.000 tax on financial international transactions to generate about 10 000 M\$, and another on the aviation kerosene to collect another 3 000 M\$ per year , enough to finance the fight against AIDS.

Today we can speak of the magnitude of the resources required in particular for poverty eradication, key for Environment, as presented by The UN General Secretary, Kofi Annan, in January (based on

the Jeffrey Sachs Report including the Route Map to reach the Millennium goals) that would amount to about 135 000M\$ in 2006 (0,44% global GDP- now ODA represents 0,25%) and 195 000M\$ in 2015 (0,54 % of GDP) to halve poverty. It would be enough with a 1/1000 tax on financial transactions to finance this. At least as it has been discussed at EU level we could begin with the kerosene tax proposed by President Chirac and already discussed by EU leaders; who could openly oppose it?

On the basis of what seems to be agreed concerning the reinforcing of UNEP we can concentrate on what seems to be the main matter for discussion , the possible transformation of UNEP into a specialized UN Agency or its enhancement to a UN Environmental Organization, the UNEO.

At this point I can say on behalf of Minister Cristina Narbona, that Spain welcomes the French proposal for a UNEO first launched informally by President Chirac at the UN General Assembly in 2003 and lately outlined in particular at the so call New York –Nairobi informal working group developing this topic at UN and UNEP headquarters.

There is a growing global environmental concern and there is a progressive building up o a global environmental policy accompanying it, and in particular multilateral agreements that are becoming everyday topics, as the Kyoto protocol.

But there is not a related adequate global structure to govern this policy and assure a minimum respect of the five underpinning principles of Governance, efficiency-effectiveness, coherence, transparency, accountability and public participation; there is not even a minimum knowledge capacity to assure informed and participative decision making processes at global level and there is not the capacity to mobilize the required resources, to replenish the existing funds to run the environmental programmes to progress on global sustainability. Something has to be done and fast enough.

And it can be done. A UNEO can be establish on equal foot at least with existing major UN capacities, as the World Health Organization or the International Labour Organization, and with similar status to the Food and Agriculture Organization, and even going out of the UN remit, with a countervailing capacity to the World Trade Organization, if we want finally to progress towards a more sustainable globalization process, there are at least equal grounds to do so.

If things have worked out and fast for the WTO and its more limited interests under a very complex world situation concerning trade , it may as well work for the UNEO that is of concern to all.

I would like to wish you, also on behalf of Minister Cristina Narbona, a constructive and successful Conference that may become a breaking point in the building up of proper frame for our future.

Thank you.