

To whom it may concern

Comments on the UNCSO “Zero Draft: The Future We Want” by the Working Group Sustainable Development of EEAC - the European Environmental and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils

We welcome that the preparation of the UN Conference Rio20plus is now intensified, finally. The Zero Draft is a starting point. However, the zero draft *on the future we want* does not yet provide the future we want. The document is more than “zero” but its content is far from being setting the scene for Rio20plus. We urge negotiators to get more to the point as regards implementation and action, to be more visioning, to be more reflective as regards assessment and interlinkages.

As SD Councils we build on concrete experience in giving independent and scientifically based advice to governments, engaging civil society and bringing about the agenda of new thinking and informed debate.

The most important point we want the draft to take up is strengthening the language of para 59-61:

59. We encourage regional, national, subnational and local authorities as well as the private sector to set up overarching sustainable development strategies for guiding decision making on all levels. This encompasses the creation of vision, long term thinking, and skills to implement commitments in an integrative way. Sector strategies provided by e.g. development plans and green economy roadmaps need to become strong and effective parts of sustainable strategies.

60. We call for the strengthening of existing regional and sub-regional mechanisms, including the regional commissions, in promoting sustainable development through capacity building, exchange of information and experiences and providing expertise. We call for sufficient capacities and accountability structures that will ensure implementation of these tasks.

61. We underline the need for more coherent and integrated planning and decision-making at all levels, as well as strengthened civil society participation. We therefore call on countries to establish Sustainable Development Councils or similar multi-stakeholder bodies that bring in new ideas, set the agenda, change market patterns, make participation schemes work and stimulate informed debate. The challenge lies in linking possible long-term futures and threats with solutions and decisions. We expect the (new) UN Council for Sustainable Development to establish working links to national and sub-national Sustainable Development Councils or similar multi-stakeholder bodies.

In order to pave the way for substantial and ambitious outcomes we are convinced that besides our recommendation mentioned above the following elements might lead to a stronger and more “sustainable” negotiation paper:

1. **Using bold language:** The document is presented in a rather defensive, timid and risk averse language. The text ought to be improved by using a much more precise and ambitious wording. Reframing would bring about a much more action-oriented focus. We

expect Rio20plus to serve as a landmark towards preserving environmental integrity and responding with economic opportunities to climate change and environmental challenges. Improved wellbeing, greater fairness, social equity, and respect for nature must become building blocks.

2. **Walking your talk:** If the greening of the economy will yield any results in the future, it will be not enough to talk others into new procedures but to start by oneself. The UN system has an important lead role to play in strengthening sustainability management within its own administration. Acceptance and legitimacy need to be improved. A clear committed transition towards deliberative democracy, transparency, social and environmental accountability and greater inclusiveness in global policy-making creates credibility.
3. **Setting milestones for the future:** We expect the Zero Draft to attract the attention of heads of states. We expect it to convince leaders of civil society, the private sector and public politics to traveling to Rio and convening a conference that really makes a difference. For this purpose we strongly support a decision for developing a set of global **sustainable development goals**, to complement and succeed the MDGs, as floated so rightly by the governments of Colombia and Guatemala. Also, new concepts of development of the “South” should be integrated in this process. In the same way we welcome the acknowledgement of the limitations of GDP and the proposed process for developing complementing indicators, to be linked to the SDGs. Making markets work for a sustainable, inclusive development provides good chances to cope with the global financial crisis.
4. **Designing the turnaround:** We express our strong concern about the uncertainties and contradictions as regards the interlinkage between sustainable development and green economy (para 26, 27 and 59). The draft significantly narrows sustainable development strategies to implementing, while they should become key instruments in guiding decision making and mainstreaming sustainability in all ongoing political activities. Creating an inclusive economy with sustainable consumption and production patterns indicates a direction and a process that should be grounded in the principles of sustainable development. In this regard, green economy strategies should be part of sustainable development strategies.
5. **Emphasising social justice:** The concept of green economy as laid down in the draft is framed in a way that focuses on finding economic opportunities in the response to climate change and environmental challenges. This is right but is too short-sighted. According to the green economy definition that had been tabled by UNEP, the concept should take the social context into account and reflect social equity, greater fairness and improved human-wellbeing.
6. **Providing for new governance:** Sustainable development must become “the” organizing and guiding principle of governance requiring all actors to take the concept into account in all their policies and programmes.
 - a. **Enhancing transgovernance:** Transition does not come by just talking about the need to transform the economy. We consider the interface between science and policy making as highly important. We expect the draft to make a bold statement as regards the need to invest into new and meaningful cooperation and communication efforts between politics, business sector, science and civil society to build up new platforms for mapping out pathways for ethical development.

