



UN ECOSOC annual ministerial review 2008

**Statement on Ecosystem
Services, 2nd July 2008**



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Stakeholder Forum delivered the following statement at the Round Table on ‘The role of ecosystems for sustainable development’, held on 2nd July from 3pm – 6pm in Conference Room 4. The statement reflected the views of stakeholders as expressed through our consultation:

“Thank you, moderator and thank you to the panelists. Distinguished delegates, on behalf of Stakeholder Forum I would like to share some findings with you from our consultation with global stakeholders in preparation for the Annual Ministerial Review. In doing so I will highlight some of the key points raised in relation to ecosystem services.

The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment has found that that over the past 50 years, humans have changed ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history. Crucially, human beings are not removed from, but reliant on the provisioning, regulating, supporting and cultural services that ecosystems provide. Yet the drive for economic growth and development with the ultimate aim of human well-being has resulted in the massive degradation of the environment and the ecosystem services upon which that well-being rests. This is in part due to inadequate education around the intrinsic value of the environment, but it is also in large part because ecosystem services are afforded little financial value in the overall economic picture. As a result of this, the pull of short-term economic gain through the depletion of such services overrides any tangible economic incentive for long-term preservation.

Payment for ecosystem services offers great potential for protecting and enhancing biodiversity, and government, business and other stakeholders all play a key role in its effective implementation. The World Business Council for Sustainable Development refers to the opportunities afforded to business through the creation of lucrative markets for products that respect or enhance ecosystems. There is also potential for site-specific direct payments to communities preserving the ecosystems from those who benefit – there are a number of examples of payment for watershed services. And of course, the role of governments in creating an overarching regulatory framework for the effective operation of Payment of Ecosystem services is critical.

Whilst the potential is great there are also limitations. To draw on Brazil’s comments, there still exist no universal standards for valuing ecosystem services. Direct payments only work where those responsible for protecting and those who benefit are very clear – where there are global beneficiaries, as is the case with the Amazon rainforests, or where there is global responsibility, as is the case in mitigating climate change that causes glacier melt and increases water scarcity, payments become more complex. There is also a concern that PES cannot function without an overarching framework of good governance. Crucially, the evolving mechanisms for facilitating payment for ecosystem services should include a range of stakeholders, rather than being the preserve of financial investors, a trend that can be identified in the carbon market. Furthermore, there should be an emphasis on explaining and communicating the concept of ecosystem services to the communities who will benefit, and also ensuring their Further, PES must be seen as complementary to a wider respect for the environment and its protection that is not directly linked to economic gain: this shift in perception can only come about through environmental education. On behalf of the stakeholders who contributed to our consultation, I would like to ask delegates to respond to some of these concerns and offer thoughts on how they can be overcome.



Stakeholders welcome the emerging dialogue on ecosystem services, and urge governments and stakeholders alike to work together to find solutions that will enhance the value of ecosystems for development, poverty reduction and human well-being.”

This statement built on the inputs from the following stakeholders to our consultation on MDG-7 in preparation for the Annual Ministerial Review 2008:

Women

- Women Organizing for Change in Agriculture and Natural Resources Management, WOCAN
- Gender and Water Alliance, GWA

Business and Industry

- International Chamber of Commerce, ICC
- World Business Council for Sustainable Development, WBCSD

NGOs

- Pragya UK
- Unitas, Bolivia
- Helio International (France)
- The Federation of Environmental and Ecological Diversity for Agricultural Revampment And Human Rights, FEEDAR (Cameroon)
- Fundación TIERRA (Bolivia)
- Tearfund
- Programa de las Naciones Unidas para el Medio Ambiente, PNUMA (Panama)
- Ecological Society "Ruzgar", Azerbaijan

Scientific and Technological Communities

- International Council for Science (ICSU)
- International Union for the Conservation of Nature

Farmers

- International Federation of Agricultural Producers (IFAP)

Local Authorities

- International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives, ICLEI

Trade Unions

- International Trade Union Confederation

Other

- Education Caucus for the Commission on Sustainable Development
- United Nations Development Programme, Gambia