

Proposals forwarded at workshop on enhancing engagement of observers

Bonn, June 9 (Dale Wen) - Interesting proposals emerged from an in-session workshop from Parties and observer organisations on how to enhance the engagement of observer organisations in the UNFCCC process.

The Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) under the UNFCCC conducted the workshop to further develop ways to enhance the engagement of observer organizations on Wednesday, 8 June. The morning session, "Proposals for enhancing existing means of participation" was chaired by SBI Chair Mr. Robert Owen-Jones (Australia), while the afternoon session, "Proposals for new means of participation" was chaired by Mr. Andrew Ure (Australia).

Ms. Megumi Endo, Observer Organizations Liaison Officer of UNFCCC secretariat started the morning session with an overview of the participation levels of observers in the UNFCCC process, past conclusions and decisions, as well as good practices of other UN processes (UNEP, Aarhus Convention, CBD, CCD, etc) to enhance UNFCCC's existing means of participation.

Parties were invited to make their comments, which were then followed by the observer groupings.

The **European Union** said that UNFCCC has been characterized by a great openness towards observers and would like to see it continue. It expressed welcome towards increase in participation but also the concern of parties' need to preserve possibilities for close door meetings.

The **United States** talked about specific proposals for enhancing observer participation, including (1) first today lunch session with SB chairs and Parties to hear comments from observers; (2) first informal meetings of significant issues not in contact groups should be open to observers wherever practicable; (3) regular reporting on progress by Subsidiary Bodies and contact group chairs; (4) greater use of workshops and technical meetings, including observer inputs; (5) creative use of other informal avenues: constituency interaction with delegations and major negotiating groups at expert level;

(6) ensure COP venues are large enough to accommodate non-governmental participant access to negotiating areas.

Australia acknowledged that observers help the process. It said that now is a critical time for the regime as Copenhagen and Cancun signify the new paradigm recognizing global realities. To build a stronger regime, provision of support to developing countries should be provided, including private sector involvement and experience in institutional design. As regards especially of the transparency framework, the design of international consultations and analysis (ICA) and measuring, reporting and verification (MRV) should include inputs from observer organizations.

Kevin Grose, from UNFCCC secretariat Information Services gave a presentation about virtual participation in the UNFCCC process. After summarizing current status of virtual participation in both "asynchronous" and "synchronous" forms, he discussed next steps to step up use of synchronous forms to increase interactive participation.

Ambassador Pablo Solon, of **Bolivia**, shared the country's experience on the first "World Peoples' Conference on Climate Change and the Rights of Mother Earth". Due to the failure of Copenhagen, President Morales, took the decision to call the Conference in April 2010, in which more than 35,000 people participated. Working groups were organized with extensive discussion over the Internet beforehand, and they jointly produced a 'Cochabamba Agreement'. He said that meetings cannot be only in English, which would exclude a vast majority of civil society groups. Those who are affected by climate change should have a voice and have an influence in decision-making, and the process of negotiations should not be reduced to experts and negotiators. Governments need to reflect on the following questions including- (1) Are we governments informing the population in an understandable way what is going on in the negotiations and what are the options for climate change? ; (2) Is there a real process of consultation within the population in the country? ;(3)

Are all sectors consulted and their concerns taken into account? He supported many proposals put forward earlier from different civil society sectors, including the creation of a fund to guarantee participation from observers in developing countries. He also commented about the over-representation from private and business sector while other sectors of civil society are under-represented and suggested maybe a quota system be introduced to restore the balance. Higher representation of civil society from developing countries should be guaranteed, as 75% or more of civil societies live in developing countries that are more affected by climate change. We should give more space to grassroots movements. Civil society cannot repeat the same mistake of speaking only in expert language where an elite group can understand.

Ambassador Alfonso de Alba, of Mexico put forward some concrete proposals for further improvements including (1) consideration of this topic in the SBI agenda to continue to develop a better relationship; (2) formalization of periodic meetings between presiding officers and stakeholders, before and during the formal and informal negotiation sessions; (3) flexibility to invite stakeholders to participate in informal negotiation meetings on ad-hoc basis. He said all meetings in the UN are supposed to be open unless otherwise decided.

Presentations by observer organizations were made by nine NGO constituencies: business and industry non-governmental organizations (BINGO); environmental non-governmental organizations (ENGO); farmers; indigenous peoples organizations (IPO); local government and municipal authorities (LGMA); research and independent non-governmental organizations (RINGO); trade union non-governmental organizations (TUNGO); women and gender; and youth non-governmental organizations (YOUNGO).

The **ENGO** constituency made several proposals, including (1) improving intervention rights by not having to submit interventions to the Secretariat in advance and by having a guaranteed intervention slot at the end of all sessions, including plenaries and contact groups, with the opportunity to intervene during the session at the chair's discretion; (2) informal meetings should be open by default; (3) host country must ensure that meeting venues can accommodate the anticipated number of participants. (4) have an independent committee to develop procedures for use in the event of any dispute relating to NGOs (including review of decisions relating to actions) . The committee mentioned above could develop such criteria in consultation with NGOs; (5) documentation should be made available to observers at the same time as Parties; observer submissions should be included in official documentation.

For new means of participation, ENGO proposed (1) establishment of participation fund for underrepresented

groups. 2) there should be a clear, effective and uniform process for observer participation in new and existing mechanisms set up under the UNFCCC process, for example the transitional committee of the Green Climate Fund and the Adaptation Fund. The current processes are not adequate; (3) one or more representatives of civil society should be nominated as observers to the UNFCCC bureau.

The **IPO** constituency emphasized that indigenous peoples are rights'- holders, not stakeholders or constituency groups. In line with Arts. 41 and 42 of the 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and in informal meetings with Parties in 2010, the IPOs recommend that indigenous peoples should have increased opportunities to make interventions and actively engage in the negotiations in the same manner as Parties, as in the Convention on Biological Diversity. Indigenous peoples should be allowed to actively participate in activities throughout the sessions, including thematic discussions, workshops, contact groups, drafting committees, as friends of the chair, informals and expert panels. They proposed the setting up of an indigenous peoples' expert body, which can act as a technical advisory body on issues of direct relevance to indigenous peoples.

David Cadman, President of ICLEI (Local Governments for Sustainability) spoke on behalf of **Local Governments and Municipal Authorities (LGMA)** constituency and said that we should work towards implementation of para.7 Dec1/CP16, which acknowledges that local and subnational governments as "governmental stakeholders".

Research and independent NGOs referred to closed meetings, which are not open to observers to report back and suggested each constituency be allowed to send 2 representatives to closed meetings.

Trade unions, women and gender groups, youth NGOs all called for the establishment of a trust fund to support the participation of civil society, in particular underrepresented groups. They also called for more open access to negotiation sessions.

The **BINGO** constituency put forward some suggestions on how the existing models can be enhanced by new technologies and innovative approaches and measures to encourage informal dialogues. They also proposed a business consultative channel, which will be a multi-window structure that could provide a range of views and interact across the full agenda of the UNFCCC, allowing for two-way exchanges. It will be business organized and funded, with open and transparent membership, governance and consensus procedures, building on existing business groups and networks.