

Regional Workshop on the Implementation of Rio Principle 10 in Latin America
Lima, Peru, October 28-29, 2013

Opening remarks by Fatou Ndoye, UNEP
October 28, 2013 - Lima, Peru

Excellencies, representatives of governments, representatives of judiciaries, civil society, dear UN colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen!

I came a long way from Nairobi, Kenya, to this beautiful region and would like to extend a warm welcome to all of you on behalf of Achim Steiner, the Executive Director of UNEP.

I will deliver these few remarks on behalf of Alexander Juras, chief of the Major Groups and Stakeholders Branch UNEP, who could not be here today.

It is a great pleasure and privilege for me, to welcome you on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, at this Regional Workshop on the Implementation of the Rio Principle 10 and the application of the Bali Guidelines in Latin America.

This workshop is the second in a series of workshops that will be held in various regions of the world. The objectives of these workshops will be to further enhance the application of the Guidelines on the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters that were adopted by UNEP's Governing Council in 2010. Just over a month ago, a similar workshop took place in Trinidad and Tobago, covering the Caribbean region.

But first of all, on behalf of UNEP and UNITAR, let me thank our partners: the government of Peru, the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, The World Resources Institute, and The Access Initiative for their assistance and cooperation in making this workshop possible. Furthermore, I would like to thank the government of Norway, for their financial support to this workshop but above all for their continued support for our work on access to information, public participation and access to justice in environmental matters; and more generally on stakeholder engagement in UNEP.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Principle 10 was agreed upon by governments in the first Rio summit in 1992, at a time, when governments realized that addressing the pressing environmental problems of the world needs new approaches, and the full and informed participation of all citizens.

Since 1992, there has been progress in applying Principle 10. European Countries, including Central and Eastern Europe countries, put in place the Aarhus Convention, the first regional instrument dedicated to the application of Principle 10. Countries which have decided to follow this road have experienced the beneficial effects of the application of Principle 10, namely they have enjoyed more environmental progress. In Central and Eastern Europe for instance, public

participation and access to information was key to facilitate the transition from centrally planned to market economies, while at the same time addressing the huge environmental problems that existed.

However, some might have expected more. It is only in 2010 in Bali/Indonesia, 18 years after Rio, that UNEP's governing council, including representatives from your respective countries, adopted the Guidelines for the development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice, called the Bali Guidelines. This was regarded by many as another milestone in the application of Principle 10, as these guidelines were meant to assist countries in filling possible gaps in their relevant national legislation in order to achieve broad public participation, access to information and access to justice in environmental matters.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Realizing that less was achieved with respect to the application of Principle 10 than was hoped for in 1992 and in the Rio+20 Conference, governments of the LAC region agreed on joint action to address Principle 10 application in the region. This bold move was translated into the Declaration on the implementation of Principle 10 in LAC, which was further complemented by the Plan of Action to improve access rights in the Region, adopted by 14 LAC countries in April 2013. This was yet another milestone in the history of Principle 10.

Your efforts in the region form part of the overall strengthening of the environmental pillars of sustainable development by reinforcing global environmental governance. As you know, paragraph 88h of the Rio+20 Outcome Document calls for the upgrade of UNEP, and among many other things for enhanced stakeholder participation. In response, UNEP has initiated a reform that intends to allow the organization better address the need of the countries and be more inclusive by facilitating public participation in agenda-setting, decision-making and implementation in UNEP, and ultimately in environmental sustainability globally. So as you can see, it is not just Member States establishing or strengthening relevant frameworks for participation but also intergovernmental organizations like ours, not just for mere participation but for significant changes in the environment.

It is in this context that we are holding this workshop, which brings together representatives from governments, judiciaries and civil society of Latin America. During the upcoming day and half, there will be opportunities to discuss best practices, lessons learnt, gaps and the way forward.

We are very much eager to learn from your national initiatives and challenges, as one of the main ideas behind my presence here today, is to take back those lessons learnt and see how the application of Principle 10 can be furthered in other regions of the world, building on your process.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For those countries that are committed to achieve further progress in Principle 10, applying the Bali Guidelines, UNEP, UNITAR and partners plan to make available targeted assistance through legal advisory service, training, capacity building and opportunities for exchange of

experiences. You will hear more about this during the workshop – tomorrow morning from my colleague Achim from UNITAR.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we have ahead of us one and a half days of work, but I also hope of interesting and exciting discussions. I do not only encourage you to actively and openly participate, but I also encourage you to tell us what we can do better and should do differently as partners.

Thank you very much for your attention and joining us today in Lima.