Ensuring Urgency to Act: Elements of the Rio+20 Agenda

Input to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development
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based on the Zero Draft titled: The Future We Want

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Climate Action Network International is the world’s largest network of civil society organizations working together to promote government action to address the climate crisis, with more than 700 members in over 90 countries. www.climatenetwork.org

The increasing impacts of climate change on the natural environment, economies and social wellbeing is one of the strongest manifestations of our currently unsustainable global development pathway. Rio+20 provides a unique historical opportunity for nations to urgently address the interdependent twin challenges of tackling poverty and environmental degradation – and shift to a fundamentally different development model. As such CAN welcomes the Rio+20 Summit as an opportunity for governments from around the world to urgently address the challenges of moving the world away from its current unsustainable trajectory towards an equitable and sustainable pathway, safeguarding the planet for present and future generations.

However CAN is extremely disappointed that the current negotiating text for Rio+20 does not fully and explicitly recognise the urgent need to act on climate change as part of a global action plan for delivering sustainable development.

This paper outlines the elements CAN believes essential to be dealt with by leaders at the Rio+20 Summit. In summary Rio plus 20 must:

1. Increase political will and ambition
   a. Ensure strong legally binding commitments and real urgent action to rapidly transition to a low-carbon and climate resilient future that includes development of renewable energy, energy efficiency and distributed clean energy (excluding coal-based power plants, nuclear power plants and mega-hydropower plants);
   b. Acknowledge the lack of delivery on previous commitments agreed at Rio, including the UNFCCC commitments for all countries to reduce emissions to allow ecosystems to adapt and to ensure that food production is not threatened, and that developed countries would provide sufficient finance and other support to enable developing countries to undertake mitigation and adaptation. Acknowledgement of the now urgent need to address the current environment, development and climate change crisis by committing to ambitious levels of binding action, in line with science and equity and with clearly measurable outcomes and milestones. Rio+20 can provide political impetus to the relevant fora - the UNFCCC and others - on the appropriate level of ambition of these commitments;
   c. Recognise that delivering sustainable development requires tackling both the roots of the environment crisis and the poverty crisis simultaneously;
   d. Fully recognise historic responsibility and equity issues associated with addressing the current global environment and development crises and that solutions to these crisis must be based on principles of equity including common but differentiated responsibility and respective capability;

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1 This position will continue to be updated. Please check www.climatenetwork.org for future versions.
e A renewed emphasis on the poorest people and those most vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, acknowledging that all countries will be impacted by climate change, with developing countries the least able to cope;

2. **Facilitate a fair green economy**
   
a Support a rapid global transition to fair green and sustainable economies;
   
b Endorse the ‘Sustainable Energy for All’ initiative with a strong call for action and a 2020 milestone;
   
c Commit to reorient wasteful consumption patterns towards sustainable ones, including by adopting indicators other than GDP that integrate social and environmental costs and benefits, promoting the more efficient use of resources and improving waste reutilization;
   
e Commit adequate and predictable new and additional long-term finance to support developing countries to reduce their emissions and adapt to the impacts of climate change with a particular focus on addressing the current structural underfunding of adaptation needs;
   
d Remove fossil fuel subsidies, beginning with production subsidies;
   
f Support the integration of an increased focus on resilience in the context of climate impacts, market shocks, food price hikes and increasingly frequent and/or intense weather-related disasters; increased action on disaster risk reduction and the inclusion of food security, rights and justice;

3. **Agree to true Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**
   
a The Sustainable Development Goals currently being discussed need to i) be universal, ii) be based on equity and fundamental human rights, iii) embed climate change as a cross-cutting issue, and iv) be formulated through open and inclusive processes;

4. **Protect forests and REDD**
   
a Agree to stop deforestation and degradation of natural forests, as well as restoring degraded natural forests by 2020 at the latest;

5. **Realise sustainable agriculture and food security**
   
a Build the adaptive capacity of smallholders to the long-term impacts of climate change and ensure agricultural policies address food security and take into account environmental limits, carrying capacity, equity and social issues, particularly gender equity.
1. Increasing the dire lack of political will and ambition

CAN members are extremely disappointed that the current Draft does not fully and explicitly recognise the urgency for acting on climate change as part of a global action plan for sustainable development.

The draft does not sufficiently recognise that the limited action taken so far to tackle climate change has not been sufficient to halt the progress of climate change and its associated impacts. This is now more urgent than ever, given that the UN climate negotiations in December 2011 agreed to a time frame that is too slow. Emissions will need to peak by 2015, and short term ambition will need to increase this year in order to avoid a global temperature rise of 2 degrees Celsius or more, and the risk of runaway global climate change. Immediate new and complementary action is urgently needed, to ensure low carbon and climate resilient solutions.

The current draft barely acknowledges the real threat of climate change and is extremely weak in making commitments to action, using terms such as ‘We encourage international initiatives and partnerships…’ such weak wording and lack of ambition undermines the urgency and imperative for taking action on climate change.

CAN recommend that the Rio text take on board the full implications of climate change and:

- **Greatly enhance the urgency of commitment and action towards a low-carbon and climate resilient future** to mitigate future climate change, applying the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capability;

- **Recognise that we are already committed to an unacceptable level of climate change and must prepare for this through adaptive measures across the economy** – food, water, energy, shelter, etc - and that we must use the green economy initiatives and sustainable development goals to move to a low carbon and more resilient world which can respond to an increasingly unpredictable climate whilst upholding human rights gender equity and the development aspirations particularly of poor and vulnerable people;

- **Explicitly state that achieving such a global transition requires substantial new flows of predictable climate finance**, above and beyond overseas development assistance (ODA), starting from 2013 and above the pledged $100 billion yearly commitment by 2020.

Steps must be taken to guarantee the rights of information, public participation and access to justice contained in the Rio principles at global, regional, national and local levels. This includes launching negotiations for a global Principle 10 convention in Rio and introducing minimum standards for public participation in international processes such as the UNFCCC negotiations.

2. A Fair Green Economy

The draft document does not mention the need for the economy to work for human needs and in acknowledgement of human rights, especially those of the poorest and politically marginalised and disenfranchised, including women or indigenous peoples. As such it is crucial that the world’s governments facilitate the rapid transition to sustainable development in a manner that is fair and promotes - rather than undermines - poverty eradication.

It is unclear how Section III A on Green Economy of the draft text is related to achievement of the sustainable development goals or the UN conventions on climate change or biodiversity.

Furthermore, it is unclear what the objectives are for the green economy or how these will be measured and progress towards them monitored.

Whilst building broad-based wealth, environmental protection and social development can, and should, be complementary goals, the links between growth, sustainable development and poverty eradication are not automatic. Therefore, the concept of Green Economy must be carefully designed, to ensure that it will promote important global economic and financial policy reforms that facilitate the necessary shift away from current economic trends that have proven to be unsustainable. The current development model has proven to exacerbate inequality and has failed to respect planetary boundaries.
The Green Economy should recognize the risks associated with investing in controversial energy technologies like Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS), nuclear power, deep water oil drilling and shale gas production, and aim for a 100% renewable future, excluding false solutions like large-scale bioenergy and large-scale hydro.

The draft asserts that the Green Economy will create market solutions to environmental and resource scarcity crises, whilst generating new jobs and more economic growth. Yet market mechanisms have to date failed to deliver widespread solutions to these problems. Some economic policy tools such as ecological tax reform and the abolition of environmentally harmful subsidies are urgently needed. On the other hand, creating markets for public goods does not automatically deliver effective protection for people and the environment. In fact it can create new risks, as experienced in projects for offsetting carbon emissions through the Clean Development Mechanism and REDD initiatives. Governments must ensure that environmental integrity, with social safeguards incorporated, are the over-riding objectives of any market based approaches.

The international community should therefore look at economic instruments in a more nuanced way. Providing economic incentives can be a sensible approach, but commodifying natural resources can also have unintended impacts on poor men and women and the environment. Economic incentives should not be seen as automatically superior to regulatory instruments.

The Green economy must deliver sustainable development and in order to achieve this, it must:

- Deliver equity between and within countries and between generations;
- Generate well-being for all and respect, protect and promote all human rights irrespective of gender, race, age, class, religion, physical ability or ethnicity;
- Be inclusive, participatory and accountable by involving communities and citizens affected by the proposed policies and projects in the decision-making processes;
- Protect natural resources and biodiversity, and recognize ecological boundaries;
- Be built on principles of sustainable consumption and production shifting the current economic models based on maximizing growth and the unsustainable use of natural resources. To support this, indicators other than GDP are needed that integrate social and environmental costs and benefits;
- Recognize the needs of developing countries in addressing the double challenge of tackling climate change and reducing poverty;
- Fund the development of green sectors and help to ensure technology transfer for low-carbon development pathways in developing countries. It must be accountable – governing markets in consultation with stakeholders;
- It must invest for the future – including strong regulation of the financial sector.

2.1 Immediate action - removal of fossil fuel subsidies

CAN welcomes the recognition in the Zero Draft that subsidies that make environmentally harmful activities more profitable impede the transition to sustainable development and must be phased out. CAN highlights in particular subsidies that support the fossil fuel industry, contributing to the greenhouse gas emissions that cause climate change and to pollution that impairs human health. Ending fossil fuel subsidies, in parallel with guaranteeing energy access to protecting vulnerable groups in the transition to a sustainable development pathway, must be a priority. Subsidy reform should be designed to a shift to clean, renewable energy (excluding coal-based power plants, nuclear power plants, and large-scale hydropower plants), energy efficiency and locally controlled distributed energy systems.
2.2 Capacity Building

The transformation to a green economy should be an opportunity for all countries. CAN recommends that international efforts to help countries build a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication supports the mechanism set up under the UNFCCC for technology transfer to ensure low-carbon development pathways for developing countries. And encourages the UNFCCC to establish a stand alone capacity building program and funding to allow countries at low levels of development to build their capacity and follow low carbon, sustainable pathways to improve their citizens wellbeing.

2.3 Climate finance

Finance for climate change-related activities – like finance for all other aspects of the new development pathway – must at its foundation direct public finances to global public goods. While we’ve heard governments say there is no money in federal coffers to pay for climate adaptation and mitigation programs in the developing or developed world, sectors of our economy that have contributed to ecological and economic instability – like the fossil fuel and the financial industries – are accruing record profits.

The provision of climate finance, as with finance for ecologically sustainable development more broadly, must adhere to the principles of transparency, equity, efficacy and good governance.

Long term climate finance

It should be acknowledged that sustainable and equitable development cannot be achieved without additional finance above and beyond resources already directed ongoing development investments in areas such as health or education. The draft does not recognise the necessity of committing adequate and predictable, new and additional funds beyond existing ODA commitments of 0.7% GNI to deliver action on climate change.

Mitigation and adaptation, including forests and biodiversity conservation, and necessary means of implementation, such as capacity building and technology should be prioritized for future funding allocation. It is crucial to apply principles and safeguards to ensure funding contributes to sustainable development, in particular for the poorest and most vulnerable. The focus should be on development models that are sustainable and community-driven such as decentralized water and energy solutions that strengthen resilience to climate change. The draft should recognise the urgency to secure new funding flows for this purpose and to quickly ramp up availability of funds available for climate change, including through the UNFCCC funds as the primary multilateral funding mechanisms for climate action.

Innovative sources

Member states should mobilise innovative finance sources, such as carbon pricing mechanisms for international shipping and aviation, and the reallocation of fossil fuel and other perverse subsidies. A global carbon pricing mechanism for the international shipping sector could both drive emission reductions from this unregulated sector and generate substantial revenues of at least 10 billion USD per year by 2020 for the Green Climate Fund. The proposal has seen growing support from developing countries, specifically if such a carbon pricing instrument takes into account the incidence incurred on developing countries through compensatory rebates, as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund have recommended.

A financial transaction tax (FTT, also known as a Robin Hood Tax) could raise substantial revenue for the Green Climate Fund, and discourage the type of short-term financial speculation that has little social value but poses high risks to the economy. A 0.05% tax on transactions like stocks, bonds, foreign currency and derivatives could raise as much as $300 billion per year. More than 40 countries already have some form of financial transaction tax, including most of the countries in the G20, and the IMF has confirmed the feasibility of an international FTT. For instance one international civil society campaign is calling for an FTT to raise resources for domestic and global public goods like public health and climate change programs. Others supporting FTT also see climate change

programmes as one important objective to use the money for, in addition to others related to poverty and development.

Additionally, considerable climate finance can also be raised through Special Drawing Rights and earmarking a proportion of revenues from a financial transaction tax, as mentioned in the latest G20 conclusions and in the report by the UN high-level advisory group on climate change financing.\(^4\)

**Governance**

Governments must show clear commitment to improved governance of all international finance regimes, including those related to climate finance and the green economy. CAN agrees that the International Financial Institutions, including all multi-lateral banks and export credit agencies should give financial support for programs and projects only if they contribute to sustainable development. CAN recommends targeting financial support towards sustainable development in developing countries to support a transition away from damaging projects such as large scale fossil fuel projects and prevent a long-term lock-in of fossil-fuel driven energy infrastructure. Engaging civil society organisations as active observers and partners in the project formulation as well as in the decision-making process and monitoring how funds are accessed, spent, and who benefits should be explicitly confirmed.

**3. Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**

Leaders must commit to formulating a new global framework of goals following the Millennium Development Goals post-2015 focusing on sustainability and integrated social, economic and ecological approaches. The intent to formulate new Sustainable Development Goals must be linked to the expert mechanism to be appointed by the UN Secretary General and the post-2015 contact group for implementation as well as broader stake-holder initiatives to legitimise and ground this process in human needs and rights.

However climate change is too urgent a problem to wait until 2015 to agree on goals and actions. Working on a post-2015 framework must not be used as an excuse for political inaction. Poor people and the planet require action now. Therefore governments must agree on pre-2015 priority actions to meet the MDG deadline and to tackle the need for immediate action to improve sustainability.

The proposed SDGs must build upon and further improve the existing global development framework of the Millennium Development Goals to ensure that progress made in the last decade is not lost and the reasons for the failure in reaching some of the MDGs addressed; yet this must not remove focus from the urgent need for action on broader sustainability issues, including climate change, but instead demands that these questions are consistently mainstreamed throughout the SDGs.

CAN makes the following recommendations for the SDGs, which must be backed by a clear plan of action to ensure delivery and implementation:

- The SDGs should be universal, meaning that all countries, whether developed or developing, have ownership and accountability to embed sustainable development in their own national policies through a global framework. CAN highlights Principle 7 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development from the 1992 Rio Earth Summit of common but differentiated responsibilities towards achieving a sustainable existence for the planet;
- The SDGs must be based on equity, both within and between nations, ensuring the fair allocation of resources is given to poor and often marginalized and disenfranchised people, including women and indigenous peoples, and poor countries to ensure a just transition to a low-carbon world;
- The SDGs must be formulated in an open, fully inclusive and participatory way, recognising that access to information and the participation of civil society and local stakeholders is the foundation of good sustainable development governance in support of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration;
- The SDGs must be holistic and capitalise on synergies across different sectors, understanding and responding to the complex interrelations between global development challenges;

\(^4\) [http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/pages/financeadvisorygroup](http://www.un.org/wcm/content/site/climatechange/pages/financeadvisorygroup)
• The SDGs must be based on recognised human rights principles, built on accepted human rights standards and promote the full and equal enjoyment of human rights for all people;

• The changing climate, with its impacts on the environment, economies, social welfare and human lives and livelihoods, is an indicator of the unsustainable pathway we are currently on, and the greatest threat to sustainability. Climate change must be addressed explicitly in the SDGs including being embedded as a cross-cutting issue across all relevant Sustainable Development Goals. In order to achieve a sustainable future, the SDGs must contribute to both mitigation and adaptation, and enabling greater resilience to disasters and climate change impacts. The goals must be based on the scientific evidence for the carrying capacity of the planet while taking into account that dealing with climate change demands not only technical solutions but a significant change in the way people and societies interact with each other and their natural environment;

• The SDGs must incorporate and support the action taken by UNFCCC, CBD and UNCCD. Sustainable Development Goals should enable local, national and regional action towards a safe climate future, as well as providing incentives for investment in low carbon, climate resilient and gender-equitable development;

• There must be coherent working across different departments and agencies of the United Nations in order to ensure that they are holistic and address the interlinked challenges we face globally and do not displace sustainable development pathways and practices across geographical regions or thematic areas;

3.1 Sustainable Energy for All

CAN welcomes the model outlined by the UN Secretary General ‘Sustainable Energy for All’ initiative, which ensures the three complimentary goals of environmental, economic and social sustainability are accounted for in the pathway to a just and equitable 100% renewable future, one that excludes false solutions like large-scale bioenergy and large-scale hydro. However, given the enormity of the twin challenges of climate change and poverty, it is necessary that the initiative greatly increases its ambition beyond doubling renewable energy, doubling energy efficiency and delivering universal access to modern energy by 2030 in line with keeping to its stated temperature targets, while recognising that even 2 degrees of warming is not safe for many countries and people in the developing world. A greater definition of access (as begun by the Global Sustainability Panel5) will also ensure environmental, social and economic sustainability, which should mean access to clean, safe, affordable and reliable energy. To this end, effective and active engagement of civil society, both at global and country level, is urgently needed and we request the Secretary General to take further steps in this direction. The gravity of the situation demands immediate action and we implore governments to make significant and measurable progress by 2020 in tackling poverty and delivering a sustainable renewable future.

4. Forests and REDD

Urgent action is required to reduce, halt, and eventually reverse deforestation and forest degradation. In light of the failure by governments and the private sector to effectively address worldwide forest loss since Rio 1992, the language in the Zero Draft should be expanded and significantly strengthened.

It is not appropriate for REDD+ to be negotiated at Rio+20. These negotiations should stay within the UNFCCC. But Rio+20 could provide high level input into the UNFCCC negotiations, taking care not to weaken the UNFCCC negotiations. Hence the Rio +20 negotiating text on halting deforestation in developing countries should be strengthened by adding an objective along the following lines:

• All Parties shall collectively aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from deforestation and forest degradation of natural forests in developing countries, with the objective of stopping deforestation and degradation of natural forests and related emissions completely, by 2020;

5 Panel recommendation 13 states ‘universal access to affordable sustainable energy by 2030’ (Resilient People, Resilient Planet: A Future Worth Choosing, 2012)
• To this end, all governments shall commit to ending policies, subsidies and corruption that drive deforestation, and instead fund the transition towards a green zero-deforestation economy which meets the needs and respects the rights of indigenous peoples, women and local communities;

• All Parties shall collectively aim to conserve existing natural and modified natural forests by 2020, ceasing conversion and instead restoring degraded natural forests. In addition, all Parties should undertake the sustainable management of forests and enhance forest carbon stocks;

• All safeguards agreed in Cancun and confirmed at COP17 in Durban for land-use changes and forestry activities shall be fully implemented and monitored. The outcome of Rio+20 should give particular attention and support to the following already agreed safeguards: Respect and enshrine the knowledge and protection of the rights of indigenous peoples, women and members of local communities, by taking into account relevant international obligations, national circumstances and laws;

• Actions should be consistent with the conservation of natural forests and biological diversity, ensuring that actions are not used for the conversion of natural forests, but are instead used to incentivize the protection and conservation of natural forests and their ecosystem services, and to enhance other social and environmental benefits.

5. Sustainable Agriculture and Food Security

Rio is an opportunity to set the world on a pathway to a sustainable food future. Tackling climate change and realising sustainable agriculture are intimately linked to achieving food security. Smallholders, comprising approximately 500 million small farms, which help to feed nearly two billion people worldwide, are particularly vulnerable to climate change, resulting in global threats for food security.

Simultaneously, agricultural activities contribute a significant percentage of greenhouse gas emissions that drive climate change, particularly those associated with intensive, high-input, industrialized agriculture.

While modern, high-input agriculture has contributed to increased food production, its negative impact must be recognized. Maintaining these high-input systems in the long run too often requires increasing inputs of fossil-fuel intensive fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation. This can be damaging to soil and ecosystems and many small-scale farmers cannot afford high input methods. There are a number of other approaches available for climate adaptation and mitigation, and support should be provided to those that can best contribute to food security, soil health, and climate resilience, in a sustainable way.

Recently, the global agricultural system – already under pressure to meet the needs of rising populations – has faced new sources of demand: to supply feedstocks for biofuel production. Biofuels are putting pressure on the global food system by creating greater competition for land, exacerbating higher food prices and food price volatility, and do not seem to be a sustainable energy solution. It is now estimated that 18 to 44 million hectares of land could be dedicated to biofuels by 2030. Approaches and measures proposed to reduce climate impacts in all sectors must be carefully assessed, in order to avoid perverse outcomes that can actually undermine both climate and food security objectives. We therefore call for coherent agricultural and climate policies to ensure a holistic approach to sustainable development.

CAN welcomes the affirmation of the right to food in the Zero Draft and the special attention for women, smallholders, youth, and indigenous farmers, recognising that they are more likely to suffer the adverse impacts of climate change. However, we call for clarification of the term ‘sustainable intensification,’ emphasising that agriculture based on intensive chemical fertiliser use, pesticides, industrial livestock and mono-cropping contributes to climate change, degradation of land by soil erosion, pollution, and nutrient depletion, and significant negative impacts on farm animal welfare. The reference to “intensification” is unclear and could be understood as a justification to continue current agricultural practices which are not sustainable. Furthermore, the focus of

6 Environmental Defense Fund and Woods Hole Research Center do not endorse this position
agricultural development should be on developing the huge potential of smallholder farmers to employ sustainable farming techniques, which can improve soil fertility, conserve natural resources, support biodiversity, reduce dependency on expensive inputs, and raise yields.

CAN urges Rio+20 to give top priority to building a climate-resilient sustainable food production system that eradicates hunger, mitigates and adapts to climate change and boosts local economies. With over 1.2 billion smallholder farmers and the majority of the rural poor still making a living off the land, a transition to sustainable agricultural food system is urgent. For sustainable agriculture to work, it is essential to focus efforts on women smallholders since half of the world’s food is produced by smallholder farmers, the vast majority of whom are women.

CAN supports initiatives to improve access to information, enhance interactions among and between farmers and the scientific community, promote farmer-driven research and innovations to increase the utilization of agro-ecological approaches.

The international community must increase investments in agriculture to enable smallholders, particularly women, to build their resilience and adaptive capacity to increased climate variability, uncertainty and the long-term impacts of climate change. These investments should be targeted at sustainable, ecological, climate-resilient, and animal-welfare friendly farming systems; enhanced knowledge-and supportive extension systems; expanded credit programs; and provision of organic fertilizer, seed banks, and water harvesting, to ensure that food and nutrition security is safeguarded for the future.