



Sustainability



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High Level Luncheon / Apéro riche

Title: Humanitarian and Environmental Crossroads for Rio +20

Location: Athletes Park (Parque dos Atletas) opposite RioCentro, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Date: 20 June 2012, 14:45 – 16:00

Guest Speaker: USG Sha Zukang (SG UNCSD), USG Valerie Amos (ERC, OCHA), USG Achim Steiner (ED UNEP), SRSG Margareta Wahlström (UNISDR), – all TBC

Participants:

Excellencies Ministers of the Environment, Ministers of Economic Affairs, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, Heads of UN Organizations participating in the UNCSD

Delegates of Brazil, Mozambique, New Zealand, Peru, Saudi Arabia, Senegal and Switzerland (also: possibly France, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Sweden, UK and USA)

Focus/Background:

The effects of trends such as population growth, resource scarcity, urbanisation and climate change on resilience and vulnerability are of great concern to humanitarians and should be recognised as such. Resilience to these emergencies is obtained through integration of mechanisms for preparedness into the broader context of international, national and local responses.

Environmental emergencies encompass man-made or technological disasters and secondary environmental hazards of natural disasters. These disasters cause death, suffering and damage of devastating proportions and can occur without regard to the level of development; though they often have a greater effect on vulnerable populations. The extent to which natural and human-induced disasters result in humanitarian emergencies depends mainly on how vulnerable and resilient communities are. Therefore, environmental emergencies need to be placed higher on the political agenda. Though numerous agreements, frameworks and guidelines to respond to emergencies at international and regional levels exist, there remains a challenge with the lack of clear and specific mandate for environmental emergencies. This can be addressed through increasing support of Member states at the country level or through a UN General Assembly resolution that could provide guidance, capacity-building and awareness-raising measures and system for developing environmental emergencies as a component of humanitarian assistance. The will and support must come not from a core group of responders and nations, but from the many member states who at various times may be either donors or recipients of international environmental emergency assistance. Increasing focus on preparedness is the key to addressing increasing vulnerabilities and raising local resilience to environmental emergencies.

We propose that this gathering discuss the need for stronger cooperation between humanitarian response and preparedness efforts, long term action and governmental and local capacity building, in light of the frequency of natural and man-made disasters and the increasing human pressure on the environment. We propose to discuss the trends, challenges and opportunities available, and to raise the profile of forging sustainable development through preparedness for environmental emergencies.