

Working Towards Earth Summit III

Statement from the NGO Caucus on Sustainable Production & Consumption

On the Adoption and Implementation of the Revised UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection and national policies on sustainable production & consumption

21 February, 1999, United Nations, New York

On behalf of Consumers International and on behalf of the NGO Caucus on Sustainable Production and Consumption I would like to thank the CSD for providing us with this opportunity to speak to the distinguished representatives from so many countries. We believe that having this kind of opportunity to speak to you here, even for just a few short minutes, to share with you some of our views, concerns and desires is extremely important to our mutual commitments to sustainable development. We strongly share the belief stated in Agenda 21 and frequently repeated inside this building that "access to information and broad public participation in decision-making are fundamental to sustainable development."¹

Unfortunately, many NGOs are concerned that many principles and values expressed in Agenda 21, including the "overriding" importance of sustainable production and consumption and the need to develop national policy frameworks for this are not taken as seriously as they should. The sense of "grave concern" about this issue seems to be lost in what we see as a process of marginalizing this issue. Being cross-cutting, the issue of achieving sustainable production and consumption is essentially the effort to create sustainable and just economies. Many NGOs feel that governments currently give far more priority to policies resulting in increased military spending, destructive subsidies, and ultimately unsustainable consumption. The low priority given to sustainable production and consumption policies and the need to develop national policy frameworks on this is indeed a matter "of grave concern" to us.

Extending the Consumer Protection Guidelines to include sustainable consumption initiatives is a crucial next step in achieving sustainable

development. Since adopted in 1985, the original guidelines have proved to be one of the most practical policy frameworks ever passed. Since that time, sustainable consumption has increasingly been recognized as a consumer protection issue., and we believe these new guidelines will be an equally effective tool for governments.

We recognize that the current text retains many of the positive ideas originally proposed at the meeting in Sao Paolo, a process that enjoyed wide and open participation from all major groups. Regrettably, since that time this level of openness and transparency has not been maintained. As a result, a number of troubling changes were made that we wish we could have had the opportunity to discuss during intergovernmental negotiations. Among them is the elimination of reference to the fact that sustainable consumption depends upon the availability of sustainable goods and services (i.e. sustainable production) and the overemphasis placed on the responsibility of consumers. Other changes lessen the responsibilities of governments and business in making the transition to sustainable consumption possible for everyone.

RECOMMENDATION:

In spite of our concerns we will not ask you to re-open negotiations on this document. We realize you have worked hard to reach a agreement on this text. Instead, **we encourage the delegates at this CSD to adopt these new guidelines and create the necessary instruments for their effective implementation.**

We will, however, ask for two things:

- First, we want to know that after all this work, this document will not end up gathering dust on the shelf. We

Con't. . .

"THE VOICE OF THE NGO COMMUNITY AT THE U.N. CSD"

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*The views expressed in Outreach are those of the authors,
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**Rio
Grinds**

— "What Rio did for the environment, Rio Grinds does for gossip."

• Today we bring you material from a well know UK Magazine 'The Fish Friers Review'. The Review is the members journal of the National Federation of Fish Friers (NFFF) - the magazine of the fish and chip shops in the UK. At the recent NFFF Conference they passed the following resolution:

• "This resolution instructs the Executive Council of the Fish Friers Review to actively work to educate fish friers to the catastrophic, long term results of purchasing immature fish or by-products of the same.

• Since the Conference the magazine has commissioned a series of articles by fishing industry and conservation experts aimed at highlighting the risks to future fish supplies and throwing open the debate on how best to conserve the riches of the seas."

• Fish Friers Review can be found on <http://freespace.virgin.net/nfff.leeds>
Subscription is \$60 a year.

want to know that these Guidelines are actually used to help governments in developing their policies on sustainable consumption and production. Therefore, **we ask you to report back to the Commission and all stakeholders during the next three years, on how you have used the Guidelines** to arrive at policy positions you will take in preparations for next year's CSD dealing with the consumption of food and forest products, and in your priorities for CSD9 when you address the consumption and production issues of energy and transportation. Finally, in the Comprehensive Review of Progress in 2002, we would like to know how the Guidelines help you in your plans for the next decade. Please let us know that these discussions – despite the pain and weaknesses – are indeed meaningful and ultimately useful.

- Second, we want to be sure that this past year's exclusion of the public and consumer groups from actively contributing to the process of revising the Consumer Protection Guidelines does not set a precedent. We want to believe that you indeed welcome civil society as an active partner in this process of achieving sustainable consumption and production. Therefore, **we ask that you agree to inform and consult with the public each year on your efforts and plans to develop sustainable consumption and production policies** so that we have the opportunity to build this partnership. In particular, we would like to hear from you and also share our ideas on how the Guidelines on Consumer Protection can become a more effective tool in achieving sustainable consumption and protecting consumers.

Some delegates may be skeptical about this idea of "partnership" between NGOs and government, just as some of us NGOs are also skeptical. However, remember that while NGOs may be critical and sometimes loud, we can also be your strongest friends and allies.

¹ United Nations. *Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21*, June 1997, paragraph 108.

CSD NGO Steering Committee News

The Committee met on Monday to discuss preparations for the April Dialogue Sessions. The meeting agreed the criteria for the selection of opening speakers and participants in each of the Dialogue Sessions.

The criteria for the NGO speakers is as follows:

- gender balance;
- regional balance;
- ability to speak well.

The final selection will be done by the CSD NGO Management Committee and will be based on the names put forward by the NGO paper co-ordinators. NGOs are committed to making the Tourism Dialogue sessions a 'real dialogue' between the stakeholder groups. Selection of the NGO teams for each Dialogue Session (18 people) will be based on participation in the process and ability to think on your feet as well as gender and regional balance.

The Steering Committee also published this week a booklet with the Guidelines by which they operate. These Guidelines will be distributed to NGOs and delegates over the coming week and are available on the CSD NGO Steering Committee web site at www.csdngo.org/csdngo. Also on the web site are NGO papers in preparation for the CSD and the list servers that they are operating.

The Steering Committee is concerned about the lack of travel funds to the CSD for Southern and Eastern NGOs. At present only the UK Government has given funds to the fund administered out of NGLS though some other governments, Germany and the Netherlands, have given funds through their own processes. It is hoped that Governments will recognize the importance of having the active participation of Southern and Eastern NGOs and will work with the Steering Committee to get as many here as possible.



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**TONY HILL,
HEAD OF NGLS?**

OR Toast of the trade: Spiro Callas, who has spent 35 years in the catering trade with his new Preston and Thomas 3 pan Radi-heat counter model at his shop in Newport. Spiro, who came to the UK from Corfu when he was 18, runs a thriving fish and chips shop.

TUESDAY SIDE EVENTS

1:15-2:45 p.m.

Roundtable on Indigenous Peoples and Tourism - Conf. Room 4

Organized by: Indigenous Peoples Development Network

The Role of Industry Initiatives in Promoting Sustainable Tourism: A Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue - Conf. Room D

Organized by: The International Hotel Environment Initiative

NGOs & Governments CAN HAVE FUN!

FAT Tuesday

at the Metropolitan Cafe's
Annual Mardi Gras Bash
with The Nut Brothers
Tuesday 23rd at 10.30pm
(1st Ave. bet. 52nd/53rd)

Lou Marini on sax (Blues Brothers)
Alan Rubin on trumpet (Blues Brothers)
Lawrence Feldman on sax (NY Philharmonic)
Larry Farrell on trombone (Woody Herman)
Tom McDonnell on vocals (Blue Brothers)
David Spinozza on guitars (Paul Simon /Paul McCartney)
Stu Woods on bass (Bob Dylan and Al Copper)
Rob Kondor on keyboards (Eric Clapton, Carly Simon)
Keith Carlock on drums (Blues Brothers)