



## EYE ON EARTH SUMMIT DECLARATION

*We the Ministers, and high-level representatives of government, business, academia and civil society (The Eye on Earth Community) present at the first Eye on Earth Summit in Abu Dhabi from 12 to 15 December 2011,*

*Deeply concerned* over the evidence of unprecedented environmental changes at all levels, including possible irreversible changes with potentially negative implications for economic and social development, especially for the poor and vulnerable groups in society,<sup>1</sup>

*Conscious* that cooperation on exchange of, and access to, timely, credible and relevant observations and information among a wide array of actors is a critical part of the science-policy interface needed for advancing the development and implementation of goals, targets and indicators for sustainable development,

*Recalling* Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, which amongst others recognises that each individual shall have appropriate access to information concerning the environment that is held by public authorities, and that States shall facilitate and encourage public awareness and participation by making information widely available,

*Recalling* the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building<sup>2</sup> and emphasising the importance of its full implementation,

*Convinced* that a strengthening of the capacity for managing, exchanging and facilitating access to information in developing countries and countries with economies in transition will help advance the development and implementation of goals, targets and indicators for sustainable development,

*Conscious* of the opportunities offered by the rapid advancement of information and communications technologies for enhancing information access, exchange and management, and the importance of promoting broader realisation of these opportunities,

*Acknowledging* the critical role of existing thematic and geographic networks and systems for exchange of and access to information, including the role of the Group on Earth Observations (GEO) and its land, sea, atmosphere and space-based Group on Earth Observations System of Systems (GEOSS), and also the role and activities of the Global Spatial Data Infrastructure Association (GSDI) in delivering of spatial data platform to facilitate data and service discovery, access and integration,

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<sup>1</sup> From OP 10 UNGA Resolution 63/220 19 December 2008.

<sup>2</sup> UNEP Governing Council Decision 23/1-I, which adopts the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, 25 February 2005.



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*Bearing in mind* that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio in 2012 represents an opportunity to renew the political commitment to the role of information in advancing sustainable development, including as it relates to consideration of the Conference themes: green economy within the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and institutional framework for sustainable development,

*Noting* the interest that has been expressed in considering the development of a global treaty based on Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration,

*Expressing our deep appreciation* to the Government of the United Arab Emirates for organising and hosting the first Eye on Earth Summit in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

*Declare that we:*

1. *Aspire* to a vision whereby decision-making for sustainable development, is empowered by the availability and equitable accessibility of credible, relevant and timely information;
2. *Decide* that the objectives of our collaboration are to foster collaboration among communities, relevant networks, systems, institutions and technology providers on the integration of economic, environmental and social information in a shared information system for the advancement of sustainable development by taking advantage of the rapid development of information and communication technologies and by strengthening capacity building and technology support to developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
3. *Agree* to advance our collaboration based on the following principles:
  - (a) The agenda for cooperation should be flexible, balanced, purpose-driven, issue-focused, and time-bound yet durable and be developed in respect for the diverse range of stakeholders and their governance structures so as to build trust among partners;
  - (b) The modalities for cooperation should be inspired by the subsidiarity principle so that functions are performed in a distributed manner by those best placed to do so and information is kept close to the source in order not to lose knowledge about its use and limitations;



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- (c) That effective mechanisms for the collection, management and dissemination of environmental information are needed and the responsibility for quality assurance of the information lies with those who collect or originate data;
- (d) Information should be made available in such a way that it avoids unnecessary duplication in data collection, underpins reporting obligations, and supports decision-making;
- (e) Environmental information should be available to the public, with any exemptions being defined in law and interpreted narrowly having regard to the public interest in disclosure so that access to information is timely, effective and affordable for all interested users;
4. *Enhance* efforts on incorporating environmental information and programmes into education curriculum at all levels: primary, secondary and tertiary and developing life learning programmes for professional development, such as distance learning activities;
  5. *Agree* to work with the United Nations in establishing a forum for cooperation among sub-global and thematic environmental information networks with a view to further enhancing their connectivity and effectiveness in supporting assessments, information exchange and decision-making for sustainable development;
  6. *Decide* to work with the Group on Earth Observations (GEO), other relevant initiatives and interested partners in supporting the further development and expansion of the existing interoperability standards for data and information exchange, as well as a global approach to the provision of web-based platforms in support of information exchange;
  7. *Resolve* to support the development of adequate institutional and legislative enabling conditions for furthering the implementation of Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration, *inter alia* based on the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Guidelines for the Development of National Legislation on Access to Information, Public Participation and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters<sup>3</sup>;
  8. *Commit* to engage in, and to strengthen existing initiatives already involved in, technical cooperation for capacity building and technology support for access to and exchange of information in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, including by supporting development of networks, regional cooperation, data collection, research, analysis, monitoring and integrated environmental assessment and legislative and institutional frameworks for access to information;

<sup>3</sup> Adopted at the 11<sup>th</sup> Special Session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of UNEP in Indonesia, 25 February 2010.



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9. *Urge* the further development of private-public partnerships for use of information and communication technologies and encourage the private sector to use their research and development capacities to enhance the implementation of national and internationally agreed goals and targets for sustainable development;
10. *Welcome* the Eye on Earth Exhibition, the Special Initiatives identified and the technical work by the Summit on policy, governance and institutional networking for information exchange; content and user needs; technical infrastructure; capacity building, education and awareness-raising, and showcasing applications;
11. Following from this, *intend* to develop further the Eye on Earth Community, supported and facilitated by the Abu Dhabi Global Environmental Data Initiative (AGEDI) and UNEP, to progress the special initiatives and other such projects and programmes, both existing and in the future, including the development of national capacities;
12. *Call* on UNEP and all actors in development co-operation to assist developing countries and countries in transition, when requested, through targeted capacity building programmes in their efforts to develop adequate national legislation and support for public access to information in line with the UNEP Guidelines on Principle 10;
13. *Call* on Governments, United Nations bodies, other international organizations, multilateral and bilateral donor agencies, civil society and the private sector to further contribute to the implementation of the Special Initiatives agreed by the Summit and the actions set out above;
14. *Resolve* to meet before the end of 2013 to review the progress of implementation of the current declaration and consider the directions for further work.

*We make these commitments* with a view to strengthening the knowledge and information infrastructure needed to advance human well-being and the three pillars of sustainable development: economic, environmental and social.