

**The civil society organizations of North America attending the meeting on *ENVIRONMENTAL GOODS AND SERVICES FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF NORTH AMERICAN CIVIL SOCIETY* held in Guadalajara, Jalisco, Mexico on 26 June 2001, prior to the *Eighth Regular Session of the Council of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC)*, came to a consensus on various issues relating to the concept of environmental goods and services, the criteria they should meet and certain priority matters relating to them. We thus present the following considerations, requests and proposals to the Council of Ministers and the Joint Public Advisory Committee of the CEC, as well as to civil society organizations and citizens at large:**

1. We consider the CEC's definition of environmental goods—which conceives of them as practices whereby greater economic integration and growth serve to promote environmental improvement under free trade regimes—to be one-dimensional and biased. It straightjackets environmental improvement within the confines of economic processes, specifically integration and growth, in a context of free trade. We expressly take issue with this definition, which neither expresses nor reflects the social, political, cultural and other dimensions needed to reach a comprehensive vision of these goods and services.

2. In particular, we hold that a definition of environmental goods and services must comprise:

a) a comprehensive, multidimensional, environmentally sustainable vision of environmental goods and services that is compatible with social justice.

b) improvements in the quality of life of local populations;

c) the inclusion of non-market goods and services, which do not have commercial value but do have social value;

d) the acknowledgement of limits to industrial and economic growth based on criteria such as ecosystem carrying capacity and respect for people's culture and social dynamics;

e) recognition of and respect for traditional uses, knowledge and practices;

f) promotion of biodiversity and genetic resource conservation, and promotion of clean agricultural and food production practices.

3. Therefore, we consider the following to be indispensable criteria for environmental goods and services:

a) the primacy of social needs and priorities, not the interests of private investors;

b) responsible resource conservation and use;

- c) promotion, support and use of appropriate technologies (in terms of emissions and wastes, renewable energy, etc.);
- d) promotion and support of fair trade and solidarity-oriented practices and processes;
- e) priority emphasis on strengthening domestic markets and consumption;
- f) respect for people's sovereignty;
- g) development and application of principles of justice, equity and solidarity (with present and future generations), validated by participatory societal processes;
- h) the full and complete inclusion of communities in decision-making and implementation processes related to environmental goods and services (including public priority and policy making; design, application, assessment and oversight of initiatives, programs and projects, etc.);
- i) placing a qualitative value on environmental improvement and conservation;
- j) conservation of natural capital versus private capital;
- k) internalization of social and environmental costs.

4. With regard to certain priority matters relating to the development and application of environmental goods and services policies, we hereby present the following demands:

1. We reject the current thrust of most energy policies. We hold that:

a) energy efficiency must be promoted as a public policy;

b) since global warming is a threat to people, agriculture and life in general, we demand that no more power plants be built based on thermonuclear or related technologies, and that public funds be invested in solar technology and alternative forms of energy. In addition, a deadline for the shutdown of existing nuclear plants should be set.

2. Public policies must be reoriented toward research into sustainable practices to support the social priorities identified above.

3. Financial policies must be devised at the trinational level to promote the primary sector, which drives social development and environmental conservation; tax incentives must be offered for clean industrial production.

4. Public policies promoting organic production, responsible and rational consumption, fair trade and food security must be developed and applied.

5. It is necessary to promote the conservation of indigenous seeds and varieties in particular, and genetic resources in general, stewarded by indigenous and peasant communities. Significantly, the possession of these goods by these communities, as well as their traditional practices and knowledge, must be recognized and respected. We reject the intellectual property approach to biodiversity and genetic resources, even if it involves paying compensation to communities.

6. Water is a vital resource which must not be subordinated to trade considerations nor to private capital or investment. Access to clean water is a right that must be guaranteed. Additionally, all policies on water must emanate from a watershed-oriented approach.

7. Public health policies emphasizing prevention and promotion must be developed and applied. These must stress the links between health and environment, from a perspective that prioritizes people's well-being, not the privatization of health care services. The use of toxic substances must be eliminated through the development, revision and enforcement of relevant regulations. Health care funds currently invested in harm assessment should be redirected toward education for prevention and promotion as well as clean industrial and agricultural production.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED BY,**

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