

IUCN - The World Conservation Union represents another innovative hybrid institutional arrangement. Its more than 600 members worldwide include governments, state agencies and non-governmental organizations, all having equal standing and balanced voting power. The governments represent the political interests of states, the state agencies bring scientific expertise, and the NGOs bring expertise and represent a broad range of sustainable development interests. The organization's council has balanced north-south representation, with councillors from Africa, Asia, Latin America, the Pacific, North America and Europe. A large and strong network of scientific and legal experts in both industrialized and developing countries provides a valuable resource for IUCN members and for the IUCN's own programmes. Its professional secretariat provides intellectual leadership in conservation science.

These informal and hybrid approaches share a common characteristic. Their success lies in the moral onus and non-binding financial commitments on the part of the parties present to act on the decisions reached by consensus. Each party then acts within its own area of responsibility and competence to meet the commonly held objectives.

The Role of NGOs

There have been valuable lessons learned from the preparatory process to date on working relationships between non-government organizations (NGOs) and the UNCED multilateral forum; and NGOs and national delegations. The experience of some delegations in consulting with national interest groups in developing their positions in their capitals, or with including NGO and business representatives on their delegations, is proving to be a positive one. These representatives bring the expertise and positions of various interest groups to the consideration of delegations. They also serve as envoys of the delegations for testing ideas. The decision to include non-government representatives on national delegations is a sovereign matter.

NGOs, business groups and other interested parties outside government are involved in many countries in preparing for UNCED. Their direct involvement in the preparatory process has been sanctioned through the accreditation of relevant and competent NGOs. A number of delegations favour their continuing involvement at the UNCED itself, while other delegations are reserving judgment at this stage. Given the important role that non-government sectors are expected to play in implementing Agenda 21, constructive participation of non-government groups at the Earth Summit will be important and valuable. It would be desirable for the results from such parallel processes as the World Industry Conference on Environmental Management (WICEM II), the work of the Business Council on Sustainable Development