

**Report of the appointment with
Marie Bonnet, Diplomatic Counsellor, and Michel Garreau, Counsellor of the Ministry of Ecology
and Sustainable Development,
Friday 25th of June 2004,
at the Ministry of Ecology and Sustainable Development in Paris.**

Narito and I (Laure) represented Agir pour l'Environnement. We wanted to better know the counsellors we had contacts with, understand what was going on within the working group on UNEO (United Nations Environmental Organisation) which was initiated by France in February 2004, and know how NGOs could participate to the debate.

Marie and Michel gave us these pieces of information:

The group's objective is to talk about UNEO and come up to a closer position on the issue.

The group's meetings: Since February, the working group on UNEO, called the "working group of the friends of UNEO", has met every three or four weeks both in New York (UNO) and Nairobi (UNEP).

Two stages in the group's discussions: After a starting stage (to present the reasons why France wanted to establish this group and to present where the multilateral environmental system stands), a second stage began at the end of April (at the 12th session of the CSD (Committee on Sustainable Development) in New York). IDDRI, the French Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations, is now coordinating several studies - financed by the French Ministry of Ecology, so as to feed the working group's debate. Among these issues are: the weaknesses of the current multilateral environmental system, environmental scientific capacity, the institutional architecture of UNEO, multilateral environmental agreements' implementation, non governmental organisations' participation and financing.

Among the working group, consensus on:

- The lack of scientific expertise in the current international environmental system
- Universal membership in the UNEP is an issue
- The inadequacy of UNEP as regards developing countries' assistance
- The blurred features of the multilateral environmental system
- UNEO should be in Nairobi.

Financing is a big issue, no consensus has been found.

For the time being, no clear UNEO is defined; everything remains to be done.

The current French objective is to give (rather diplomatic) emphasis on UNEO. Both M. Barnier, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, and M. Lepeltier, the Minister of Ecology and Sustainable Development, are going **to promote UNEO in the different international fora**. In particular, UNEO will be promoted at the General Assembly of the UN in September, at the Summit for the Millenium goals assessment in September, at the Summit of "francophonie" in November. The G8 should tackle the UNEO question as well. Germany should organise a meeting for experts on UNEO in Autumn.

The issue of legitimacy of the Ministers of the Environment as regards the discussions on UNEO has been underlined. Actually, the Ministers For Foreign Affairs have the legal competence to discuss on this international organization.

UNEO and UN reforms: Discussions within the working group take into account the UN reform and UNEP strengthening. UNEO is seen as a step after the strengthening of UNEP; it is not contrary to such a strengthening.

As regards transparency, there's a black out. No paper is available. The documents IDDRI will draft won't be published. Why? Ms Bonnet fears pressure against the working group Members and wants them to feel free to present their positions and change their minds... She seems to forget the virtues of the NGOs "lobby".

No formal discussion with NGOs is foreseen. Any decision in this field will result from the working group Members' will, Ms Bonnet said.

Apparently, an informal dinner with NGOs took place during the CSD in New York, April 2004. Moreover, "some" (sic) NGOs have already sent their comments and suggestions to the working group. She didn't tell us what NGOs these were. We've then sent her the "common position of NGOs on the GEO" and gave her the first GEO campaign document.

Last piece of information, at the 3rd congress of the IUCN in Bangkok, November 2004, M. Lepeltier will try and meet NGOs.

