

Campaign for a Global Environmental Organization: A French Perspective

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Prepared for

Global Environmental Governance: the Post-Johannesburg Agenda

**23-25 October 2003
Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy
New Haven, CT**

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INTRODUCTION

This paper addresses a number of questions regarding the development of global environmental governance and outlines strategies for addressing the serious pressures that threaten our global environment. It analyzes the adequacy of the current international institutions and suggests ways for their improvement. The paper argues in favor of the creation of a Global Environmental Organization (GEO).

The idea is not new. Since the end of the 1990's, it has been emerging recurrently on the international scene, but never with enough force to muster the political will and consensus necessary to turn rhetoric into reality. The declarations by former French Prime Minister Jospin and by President Chirac at the Johannesburg Summit in 2002 enlivened the debate. France now seems to be the leading voice for a Global Environmental Organization. But a mere call for such an organization will not suffice. What is necessary is a sound explanation of the role such an institution could play and the mechanisms by which it could improve the protection of the global environment.

In this context, the French association Agir pour l'Environnement (Acting for the Environment) initiated in June 2003 a citizen mobilization campaign for the creation of a GEO. With our partners – about thirty NGOs from France and abroad – we attempt to increase public awareness and convince governments of the need for reform of the global environmental governance system that would lead to the creation of a GEO. This article presents the thinking of the actors in the campaign and tries to answer the following questions: To what extent can a GEO improve the protection of the environment on a global scale? What should be its organizational structure and how can we overcome the obstacles to its creation? The paper concludes with an analysis of the campaign within the French context.

ENVIRONMENT: POOR RELATIVE OF INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS

A quick overview of international institutions shows that the environment is relatively neglected at the global level. It came to the political agenda relatively late in the development of the international institutional architecture and an inappropriate institutional structure was devised to address environmental matters.

A late concern

At the United Nations, the environment is considered a secondary issue. When the UN was created in 1945 its mandate focused on peace, human rights, and social and economic progress. Thus, environmental protection is missing from the UN Charter. International institutions and organizations were built but none were created with explicit mandate to address environmental issues. Meanwhile, specialized agencies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization, World Health Organization,

International Maritime Organization, and UNESCO acquired sectoral competencies in the environmental field.

In 1972, the first international conference dedicated to the environment was held in Stockholm. It showed a clear intention to unite under one program all the activities undertaken in this field by the different organizations and institutions of the UN, in order to endow them with a new dimension. But by then environmental protection was already considered a burden. To appease both industrialized and developing countries,¹ the decision was taken to create a weak institution, with a narrow mandate and a small budget: the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP).

Inappropriate institutional structure

Conceived as the environmental conscience of the UN, UNEP is a subsidiary program attached to the General Assembly of the United Nations. It reports to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which transmits the information it deems necessary. Thus, UNEP's voice and authority are diminished. The programs within UNEP are financed by voluntary contributions from member states, allowing rich contributing countries greater control over the organization. UNEP's budget is extremely limited (annual average of \$40 million, miniscule in comparison with \$28 billion for the World Bank in 1998²). UNEP is the only UN agency with its headquarters in Africa (Nairobi, Kenya). This merit is moderated by the difficulty of access to Nairobi, the political instability in Kenya, and infrastructure and basic services problems. Finally, the mandate of UNEP is very narrow as it lacks proper operational (or vertical) competence. Its function is only horizontal and consists of "catalyzing" and coordinating the activities already existing in a dozen UN agencies with environmental responsibilities.³

In addition to UNEP, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) were inserted into the already complex institutional architecture for global environmental governance. The GEF was created in 1990 and is jointly administered by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNEP. It gathers funds to counter global threats to the environment (biodiversity, climate change, pollution of international waters, depletion of the ozone layer, and, more recently, land degradation and persistent organic pollutants). The CSD was created during the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio with the mission to monitor and report on the implementation of Agenda 21.

¹ Tyler Farr, Karen, "A New Global Environmental Governance", Georgia Journal of International Law, Issue 28, 1999-2000.

² Kirton, John, University of Toronto, Director of G8 group research, "Generating Effective Global Environmental Governance: Canada's Challenge 2002."

³ Esty, Daniel and Ivanova, Maria, Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy, "Making International Environmental Efforts Work: the Case for a Global Environmental Organization." May 2001.

The fragmentation of environmental competencies is further aggravated by the dispersion of the secretariats of about 200 multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). Far from the headquarters of UNEP, important MEA secretariats like the Montreal Protocol for the ozone layer, the Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), or the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change operate without enough coordination with UNEP and with each other.

This dispersion of institutions shows the reluctance to endow UNEP with a central position in global environmental governance. Besides, since 1992, the concept of sustainable development has theorized the necessity of integrating environmental concerns in all international institutions while promoting horizontal cooperation. But as Sandrine Maljean-Dubois and Rostane Medhi write: “horizontal cooperation remains all too often a sort of unreachable ideal, whereas the nature of the problems to be treated requires more than an improvement in information exchange, a deep coordination between the organs that relate to sustainable development.”⁴

UNEP has played an important part in initiating many international and regional conventions but has been overloaded in its catalyzing mission. The current Executive Director of UNEP, Klaus Töpfer, bitterly assesses: “The growing number of environmental institutions, issues and agreements are placing stress on current systems and our ability to manage them. The continuous increase in the number of international bodies with environmental competence carries the risk of reduced participation by States due to limited capacity in the face of an increased workload, and makes it necessary to create or strengthen the synergies between all these bodies.” The judgment is severe: “The basic premise for charting a new course for institutional strengthening is that existing institutions do not and can not adequately address current and future needs.”⁵

Klaus Töpfer lists the options put forward by UNEP to strengthen organizations and structures for global environmental governance:⁶

- Upgrading UNEP from a United Nations program to a fully fledged specialized agency equipped with suitable rules and own budget;
- Utilization of the General Assembly or the Economic and Social Council in a more comprehensive institutional manner, for example by transforming the Economic and Social Council into a Council on Sustainable Development;
- Establishment of a new World Environmental Organization (related questions remain, however: what functions would it have, would it act as an umbrella for MEAs, what financial resources and what authority will it possess?);

⁴ Maljean-Dubois, Sandrine and Medhi, Rostane, “Environnement et développement, les Nations unies à la recherche d’un nouveau paradigme,” 7^{èmes} rencontres internationales d’Aix en Provence, janv. 1999.

⁵ Töpfer, Klaus, International Environmental Governance, Report of the Executive Director, UNEP/IGM/1/2, 4 April 2001.

⁶ *Ibid.*

- Transformation of the Trusteeship Council into the chief forum for global environmental matters, including administration of Multilateral Environmental Agreements, with the Commission on Sustainable Development reporting to an Economic Security Council, rather than the Economic and Social Council;
- Some consolidation between UNDP and UNEP;
- Broadening of the mandate of GEF to make it the financial mechanism of all global environmental agreements and link it more closely with UNEP;
- Raising the profile of the Commission on Sustainable Development to integrate the three “pillars” - environmental, social and economic - with greater involvement alongside GEF, other UN programs, and the United Nations Development Group, and involving ministries other than environment ministries;
- Establishment of a new environmental court.

Some of these options are bound to face serious challenges. The current system possesses deep flaws – extreme fragmentation leading to opacity, lack of coherence, inefficient use of the meager budget, weak enforcement of MEAs, lack of authority and legitimacy in the global governance architecture – that make mere tinkering around the edges a futile (and costly) effort. A fresh start with a new organizational structure is necessary.

GLOBAL ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANIZATION: AUTHORITY, COHERENCE, DEMOCRACY

In spite of the complex institutional architecture for the environment described above and the adoption of hundreds of multilateral treaties, we are faced with a continuous degradation of the environment on a global scale: climate change, biodiversity loss, progressive exhaustion of natural resources, pollution of coastal zones and international waters, increase in the volume of waste (including radioactive waste), deforestation and desertification, privatization of natural genetic resources, etc. A new, global dimension characterizes this crisis. Consumerist tendencies, unchecked economic growth, and dramatic increases in commercial exchanges accelerate the crisis. Therefore, a fundamental change in our approach to development is imperative as well as a greater awareness and a collective mobilization of states in a new international collective effort.

The task is immense and the existing institutions seem helpless to face it. The system for global environmental governance has to be considerably strengthened. Three main priorities emerge: authority, coherence, and democracy. The form of a new environmental organization should follow these main lines.

Authority

The UN needs to take a clear stance that the environment and global public goods protection have become the new priority. In this regard, environmental protection should be included in the UN Charter. The environment should also be given a UN specialized agency with an appropriate and stable budget. This Global Environmental Organization would have a political role to play inside the global governance system. Dominated by free trade and commercial interests embodied by the WTO, the system for global governance has been increasingly contested throughout the world since the Seattle conference in 1999.

The WTO does not have a counterweight in the field of environment. Thus, it has become the forum where environment and trade/economy concerns are contested and “resolved.” The WTO has expanded its role to encompass agriculture, genetic resources, and services in basic goods such as water and energy. The GEO we call for could have the function to prevent contradictions within international agreements through a mechanism for prior consultation with the WTO. For example, it could alleviate the risk of conflict between the Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety (in force since September 2003) and WTO rules (the precautionary principle, the principle of prior and informed consent, and requirements for labeling genetically modified products are all potentially discriminating measures) by introducing an arbitration procedure. More generally, the GEO would contribute to a more balanced global governance, shifting the trends toward a more sustainable development.

In becoming the central forum for decision and collective action of states in the field of environment, the GEO could also give birth to a dynamism that would complete the international legislative edifice: strengthening soft law into hard law on forests, for example, and adopting the missing pieces, including an agreement on environmental (and social) accountability of private firms, on maritime transport, on equitable use of natural resources (freshwater, fossil energy-an agreement that could be a powerful peace factor) and on global eco-taxation. A global agreement on all these topics can appear utopist in the short term but it is a goal that needs to be pursued.

Better control and enforcement of international environmental law are essential elements for granting authority to an international environmental body. In spite of the absence of a necessary tool to assess and improve the implementation of all MEAs, it is widely recognized that they are relatively poorly applied. Where the legislative corpus represents about 500 multi- and bilateral agreements, this problem is a major flaw in the global environmental governance system.

Reporting mechanisms need to be streamlined and harmonized into a core report for all MEAs. A key feature currently missing, however, is the possibility to sanction a state for violating a MEA. A permanent court with jurisdiction over the whole set of multilateral agreements relating to global environment is the necessary tool in this regard. There are about fifteen key MEAs:

Multilateral Environmental Agreements with Global Impact

Ramsar, 1971	138 parties	Convention on wetlands
Paris, 1972	176 parties	World Heritage Convention
Washington, 1973	146 parties	CITES : Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species
Bonn, 1979	84 parties	Convention on Migratory Species of Wild Animals
Montego Bay, 1982	157 parties	Convention on the Law of the Sea
Vienne, 1985	173 parties	Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer
Montreal, 1987	172 parties	Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer
Basel, 1989	131 parties	Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal
Rio, 1992	135 parties	Convention on Biological Diversity
Cartagena, 2000	57 parties	Protocol on Biosafety
Rio de Janeiro, 1992	180 parties	Framework Convention on Climate Change
Kyoto, 1997	180 parties	Protocol on Climate Change
Paris, 1994	179 parties	Convention to Combat Desertification
Rotterdam, 1998	46 parties	PIC: Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade
Stockholm, 2000	35 parties	Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

Source: *Guide on the Environment and Trade*, UNEP and IIDD (2001). Compiled by the author.

In terms of sanction and control of MEAs, the competence of the GEO could be exclusively limited to these global agreements (plus future agreements). A precise mandate favors transparency. The Global Court for the Environment could have jurisdiction over these global agreements. The Court could forge links with the dispute settlement body of the WTO through a mechanism for prejudicial question and suspended sentence imposed on the WTO.⁷ The International Court of Justice could serve as an appellate court. A special environmental chamber was created in the ICJ in 1993 but since both parties to a dispute have to agree to submit a case before it, the usefulness of the court is reduced. The environment chamber has not yet been used. As an appellate court, the submission of a case before the ICJ could be mandatory.

Coherence

Fragmentation of organizational mandates in the field of environment is costly in terms of time, money, human resources, and efficiency in general. A unifying frame for global environmental governance could ameliorate these problems. As S. Doumbé-Billé states: “a vertical institutional

⁷ Proposal made by the former French Commission on Sustainable Development, Recommendation 9 on the WTO and environment protection with regard to sustainable development (see www.agirpourlenvironnement.org).

reorientation is essential, both for a better integration of sustainable development in the UN competencies along with a better use of the available financial and human means and for building a real ‘institutional democracy’”.⁸

As UNEP should have been in 1972, the GEO would constitute the central frame for all activities in the field of the global environment, defining its mandate through the scope covered by the fifteen MEAs cited above. The logic consists in repatriating the competences that specialized agencies have gained in the field of the global environment. Of course, the objective is not to oppose the principle of integration of environmental concerns into all sectors; rather, it is to delegate operational activities relating to global environment to the new organization. The GEO, however, will not monopolize all policies and activities relating to the environment. The principle of “active subsidiarity”⁹ will be observed so that the GEO will promote partnership approaches, elaborate common guidelines for environmental protection and evaluate their efficiency. The implementation of this principle requires regional branches of the GEO on each continent.

Democracy

Democracy is the third pillar of the suggested Global Environmental Organization. Global governance can no longer be left in the hands of the rich countries alone ; it has to include the South on the one hand, and civil society and local authorities on the other. Developing countries are marginalized in the decision process of global governance. As Pierre Calame states, in international negotiations, only the agenda of rich countries is effectively taken into account. Poor countries have no choice but to have recourse to deliberations without real impact – “When the American president said at the 1992 Earth Summit that the American way of life was not negotiable, he nullified the negotiations. As long as what can be negotiated is decided only by the rich countries (for example, free movement of goods, yes, free movement of people, no; terms and conditions for the development of poor countries, yes, questioning rich countries’ way of life, no; tradable permits for exchanges of carbon dioxide emissions, yes, property of natural resources, no; etc.), global governance and its constraints will hardly be accepted”.¹⁰ Another problem is the proliferation of complex international

⁸ Doumbé-Billé Stéphane, *Droit international et développement durable*, ed. Frison Roche, 1998.

⁹ The principle of active subsidiarity is based on the idea that policy efficiency is determined by active relations between different governance levels. According to Calame (2001), it combines three basic ideas:

- various governance levels share a common responsibility : the point is not to know how a given level will deal with problems attached to its competence but rather to know how the various levels cooperate, each with their own means, to handle common challenges, from the local to the global scale;
- societies have common challenges (reflecting the unity of humanity) but the best solutions are always specific (reflecting the diversity of humanity) : each territory has to find the most relevant answers to principles defined collectively;
- no community is endowed with absolute sovereignty on a territory : each of them is accountable for its own management to the entire international community.

¹⁰ Calame, Pierre, *Fondation pour le progrès de l’homme, cahier de propositions: “Refonder la gouvernance mondiale pour faire face aux défis du XXIème siècle,”* 2001.

conferences that impose a heavy burden on negotiators and especially those from the South who are fewer, less specialized, and sometimes without access to proper translation. These organizational problems could be solved by topic clustering and an agenda-setting process determined through a vote of delegates from different regions.

Participation of civil society is also increasingly important. The UN recognizes that a “global public policy network” is “the most promising partnership in the age of globalization.” At the global governance level, representative democracy has reached its limits, notably because of a retreat of the state confronted by the power of the market and a lack of transparency. Citizens, NGOs, and local authorities need to be represented in an institution like the GEO. Legitimacy and transparency are at stake. In this regard, the GEO could provide a new model for a global organization, promoting participative democracy.

If we want environment consciousness to emerge in our society, the GEO has to be close to the citizen. Various means can be explored, including sending “environment presenters” in schools, organizing global conferences for citizen and public information campaigns, including citizens in the decision-making organs of the GEO or creating a mechanism for the public to initiate a law, as can be found in the Constitution project for the European Union. The first step would consist in widely ratifying the Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in environmental matters. Participation of NGOs in a more constructive and “official” capacity could include granting access to NGOS to the Global Court for the Environment to denounce a treaty violation or intervene in judicial proceedings with an expanded *amicus curiae* status. Local authorities must not be forgotten. They are the central actors in implementation of sustainable development policies. Following the « active subsidiarity » principle, the GEO could forge partnerships with such authorities and initiate cooperation among them. Finally, the private sector must certainly play a part in the GEO. It will be important, however, to keep its influence on par with that of the other actors.

DESIGNING THE GEO

The form of the GEO has to reflect the three core principles of authority, coherence, and democracy. This implies that the organization be a specialized agency within the UN, endowed with a strong mandate to integrate and guide the environmental activities of the other agencies and with a secretariat for the fifteen MEAs which coordinates their work but preserves their autonomy.

This model actually matches the one presented by Daniel Esty and Maria Ivanova, an architecture with three levels comprising “consolidation, coordination and consultation”¹¹ :

¹¹ Esty and Ivanova, 2001.

1. At the center, Esty and Ivanova place the organizations responsible for the global commons – UNEP, WMO, the International Oceanographic commission (IOC) and International Hydrological Programme (IHP) of UNESCO – to form the GEO.
2. The second level would bring together the structures and secretariats of MEAs, to be “co-located” with the GEO with a high degree of coordination but remaining independent.
3. The third level involves strong consultation links with other international bodies that have environmental responsibilities including the CSD, UNDP, FAO, WHO and UNESCO. And a more distant consultation with economic and development agencies: the World Bank, Regional Development Bank, and WTO.

A possible organizational design of the GEO could include: a Global Parliament for the Environment, an Executive Bureau (with five sub-bureaus on each continent), five Global Committees, and a Global Court for the Environment.

Global Parliament for the Environment

The International Labor Organization with tripartite representation is a useful model to consider for composition of a Global Parliament for the Environment. State and local authorities, NGOs and citizens, and the private sector all need to be represented in this body.¹² Representatives would be designated by member states on national lists following specific terms.¹³ Members of Parliament would have the power to adopt an act with a two-thirds majority. This majority should include the simple majority of developed states AND the simple majority of developing states in order to confer a veto right to each group.¹⁴ This legislative power goes far beyond UNEP’s mandate and opens new possibilities. The parliament would meet twice a year for five days to decide on the global priorities for environmental protection.

Executive Bureau

The Executive Bureau of the GEO would execute the Parliament’s decisions. It would also have the power to take emergency decisions in case of an ecological disaster. It would ensure coordination with global MEAs and permanent consultation with other institutions of the UN, favoring integration of environmental concerns without giving up its operational responsibilities. Five regional executive bureaus would be constituted on the same scheme.

¹² This division is relatively artificial but it synthesizes the main dividing lines.

¹³ Direct universal suffrage would seem preferable for citizen commitment but we find it unrealistic for a private company or an NGO to undertake an electoral campaign.

¹⁴ Esty and Ivanova, 2001.

Global Subject Committees

Five global committees on specific subjects – ethics committee, scientific committee, judicial committee, information committee, and citizen committee – would stand permanently under the executive bureau and intervene before or after decisions taken by the Parliament and the Bureau. The ethics committee would have a key role in adopting policies on questions like future generation rights, global public goods, crime against the environment, or environmental duty to interfere. The scientific committee's mission would be to produce reference studies about environmental issues with the support of a large network of independent scientists and to supervise technology transfer. The judicial committee would assist the ethics committee and coordinate the monitoring and enforcement of implementation of MEAs by their respective secretariats. The information committee would have the leading role in information dissemination to other agencies, governments, and the public. The citizen committee would make recommendations and would be consulted by the Parliament before any important vote.

Global Court for the Environment

The Global Court for the Environment would be the permanent judicial body of the GEO. It would have the power to sanction states for serious violations of a global MEA. Sanctions would be designed according to the seriousness of the violation and taking into account the capabilities of the state, ranging from injunction to repair of environmental damage and from fines to suspension of various rights under conventions or in the UN. The court would be managed by a college of prosecutors with discretionary power to sue a state. Sanctions would be defined by the Parliament after the creation of the GEO.

OBSTACLES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Basic positions on the GEO follow these trends: European states are somewhat in favor of it, with France and Germany as strong leaders; the current administration in the United States is clearly opposed to any international environmental constraint; and developing countries fear that the GEO might hinder expanded trade through barriers disguised as green intentions.

Despite its role as a counterweight to the WTO, it is interesting to note that the GEO has found supporters among free trade advocates. Renato Ruggiero and Supachaï Panitchpadki, former and current Director General of the WTO respectively, have called for the creation of a GEO. *The Economist* and Sir Leon Brittan have come forth with similar proposals. The logic is that the WTO is not equipped to handle environmental matters and that these questions would better be delegated to another agency. The United States may be swayed by this approach, provided the GEO does not encroach upon its sovereignty or does not question the hierarchy between environment and trade rules. In the short term, American unilateralism and mistrust of the UN (except when it can serve US

interests) leaves us very little hope that the United States will join in. The participation of other countries is therefore less likely.

Are developing countries' fears of constraints to market access justified? If nothing is done to compensate the handicap they start with, certainly. Eliminating the debt of developing countries is one possible compensation tool and would be an equitable bargain. Indeed, the economic debt owed by the South may in fact be close to the ecological debt owed by the North (including natural resources extraction, pollution of the global commons, and waste trade¹⁵). More pragmatically, the North should implement the common but differentiated responsibility principle by helping the South to develop with clean technologies and the allocation of the promised 0.7% of GDP to official development assistance.

Budgetary constraints are a major obstacle to reform of the current system and creation of a GEO. As a specialized agency of the UN, the budget of the GEO will be financed by compulsory contributions by member states. A stable budget will allow the adoption of long term programmes. It would be logical to fully attach the Global Environmental Facility to the GEO, making it the financing mechanism for all global MEAs. Additional resources could come with a Tobin tax, a global eco-tax, donations, or other innovative means. Proposals for financing mechanisms need to be elaborated carefully by specialists in this area.

Why would states concede to create a supranational agency for the environment? Inescapable ecological interdependence may put ever stronger pressures on countries to cooperate to avoid serious adverse consequences to their territories and populations. However, a certain maturity and a sense of responsibility is required. Yet, we are convinced that the GEO will come into existence. It is about common sense and organisational rationality. But so far the number of ecological disasters is certainly not sufficient to instill in governments a sense of urgency or the moral obligation to act. Tinkering with sectoral policies is not acceptable. A radical reform of the global institutional framework is imperative.

FRANCE'S POSITION IN THE GEO DEBATE

France has emerged as a fervent advocate of a Global Environmental Organization on the international arena. The idea was launched within the political circle. Today, a national campaign led by NGOs is under way to push for concrete action.

¹⁵ Russi, Daniela, Professor of economics at the Autonomous University of Barcelona, intervention at the "Summit for Another World," Annemasse, France, June 2003.

French political stance in favor of a GEO

President Chirac asserted the necessity of a GEO alarmed and resolute in his speech at Johannesburg Summit in 2002:

“Our house is burning and we look elsewhere. [...] The Earth and humanity are imperiled and we are all responsible. [...] It is time for us to acknowledge that global public goods exist and that we have to manage them together. It is time for us to affirm [...] a superior interest of humanity that obviously surpasses the interests of each of its countries. [...] For a better management of the environment, for the implementation of the Rio principles, we need a Global Environmental Organization.”

After the declaration of Chancellor Kohl in favor of a GEO in 1997, former French Prime Minister Jospin called for the creation of a GEO in April 2000. Under the leadership of Environment Minister Dominique Voynet, France took advantage of its presidency of the European Union to put forward the idea of a GEO. France’s credibility, however, was jeopardized by its low contribution to UNEP (only one fourth of its obligation).

Citizen mobilization campaign initiated by Agir pour l’Environnement

The political initiative for a GEO caught French NGOs unprepared. In order to remedy the absence of NGOs from the debate and to give content to what was mostly a political posture, the association Agir pour l’Environnement (Acting for the Environment) launched a campaign for the creation of a Global Environmental Organization. On the basis of a public Call for the Creation of a GEO, signed by intellectuals and political personalities, the campaign was launched on the occasion of the G8 in Evian, at the “Summit for Another World.”

Among the partners in this campaign are Attac, the Confédération Paysanne (member of Via campesina), Legambiente (Italy), WWF, Earth Action, and ENDA Third World. About thirty associations in Europe, Africa, and South America brought their support. Other NGOs showed more scepticism and voiced concerns that a campaign for a GEO would mobilize too much energy for an uncertain outcome.

Agir pour l’Environnement organized Round tables and Forums on global environmental governance.¹⁶ We met with officials at a dozen embassies, the European Commission, the European Parliament, and with counselors and representatives of the French government.¹⁷ 50,000 campaign leaflets in French were sent to our members and our partners. Citizens sent postcards calling for an

¹⁶ The next event will be held during the European Social Forum in Paris in November 2003.

¹⁷ The reports of these meetings are available in French at www.agirpourenvironnement.org.

international ad hoc conference for the creation of a GEO to the UN Secretary-General, the President of the European Parliament, and the French President. The level of public participation was impressive despite the technical and institutional content of the issues. The campaign is under way until March 2004.

Naturally, the French government welcomed our campaign. Government officials confessed to having done very little work as to the content of the GEO.¹⁸ French proposals for a GEO are not consistent, jeopardizing the viability of the effort at large. If other governments are to join in, they need an analytically sound proposal. The Environment Directorate-General in the European Commission encouraged us to spark off a debate inside the European Commission, which could eventually lead to a mandate, by the Council of the European Union, of a representative to promote the GEO idea within the UN. A few months after the beginning of our campaign, we received an interesting signal from the French President. He wrote to us that he was personally convinced of the need to create a GEO and above all informed us that France “will launch this autumn an explanation campaign aiming to gather all the States determined to act in that direction.”

¹⁸ In contrast to the Jospin government in 2000/2001 which produced thoughtful reports on global environmental governance.