

November 10, 2011

Dear Dr. Holzwarth, Dear Dr. Konukiewitz:

Last month we received your invitation for the Bonn Nexus Conference, together with about 50 other civil society representatives. Given the challenging title of the Conference, and its timing within the preparatory process for RIO+20, we gladly accepted to participate in the discussions.

Given the need for some radical and significant changes in our approach to the water, energy and food security nexus, we expected that the program would include presentations and speakers that would stimulate 'out of the box' thinking, and would even generate new relations between the diverse participants that will be present during the meeting.

However, based on the program of the Conference published three weeks ago, we are seriously questioning the usefulness of our presence, both for the people organizing the Conference and for ourselves. We find that the program is imbalanced, emphasising technological and market-based solutions while paying hardly any attention to crucial issues such as governance. We feel this imbalance is also reflected in the composition of the various panels, given the large number of experts representing international institutions –including globally operating NGOs- and companies, and the limited number of experts and representatives from a broader group of NGOs and the 'Global South'. Despite the Civil Society advisory group members raising these concerns, to get a better balance and civil society inclusion in the current program, this continues: for example we hear that 'CSO practitioner presentations' that are planned such as the presentation from an India on rain-fed agriculture are not yet featured in the program.

We especially regret that 'hot issues' related to mainstream approaches to solve the unfolding planetary crises that were suggested by the civil society advisory group, were ignored. Many of these issues are crucial when analyzing market-based solutions and technologies that are sometimes touted as 'silver bullets' for global crises. These issues require an honest and open debate in the context of the Nexus discussions. We strongly urge you to consider opening such spaces.

We appreciate the German Federal Government's efforts to generate discussions on the future of our societies and our planet. However as it is framed now, we have serious doubts as to whether this program will allow us to take significant steps towards sustainability for all; in fact we suspect it might take us backwards.

We fear that the Nexus Conference is setting a dangerous precedent for UNCSO Rio+20, giving the main stage to private sector and international organizations, downplaying the responsibilities of governments, and providing limited, inconsequential and controlled participation by civil society. The challenges and emerging issues to be addressed in Rio de Janeiro require ample space for civil society to engage meaningfully.

We would appreciate it if you could open up space in the program of the Nexus Conference for dialogues on governance that include speakers from civil society and the

Global South, in order to ensure that your initiative, and our time together between November 16 and 18 will make a difference. In particular, we suggest that each panellist be asked to frame their discussion not only in terms of environmental sustainability and economic viability but in terms of human rights, equity and environmental justice, and that any nexus solution is informed by such a framing.

With best regards,

Undersigned,

1. Roxana Castellón T., Agua Sustentable, Bolivia.
2. Danielle Hirsch, Both ENDS, The Netherlands;
3. Hemantha Withanage, Centre for Environmental Justice, Sri Lanka;
4. Ulrich Eichelmann, ECA Watch, Austria;
5. Liane Greeff, EcoDoc Africa, South Africa;
6. Neth Dano, ETC Group, Philippines;
7. Jim Thomas, ETC Group, Canada;
8. Pat Mooney, ETC group Canada;
9. Nathalie Seguin, Freshwater Action Network (FANMex), México;
10. Gabriella Zanzanaini, Food & Water Europe, Belgium.
11. Heike Drillisch, GegenStroemung - CounterCurrent, Germany;
12. Jeff Conant, Global Justice Ecology Project, U.S.A;
13. Catarina Illsley, Grupo de Estudios Ambientales A.C. (GEA), México;
14. Gopal Siwakoti 'Chintan', Himalayan & Peninsular Hydro-Ecological Network (HYPHEN), WAFED, Nepal;
15. Paul Quintos, IBON International, Philippines;
16. Shiney Varghese, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, U.S.A;
17. Peter Bosshard, Intenational Rivers, U.S.A;
18. Sena Alouka, Jeunes Volontaires pour l'Environnement Lomé, Togo;
19. Shripad Dharmadhikary, Manthan, India;
20. Aksel Nærstad, More and Better Network, Norway;
21. Michael Mazgaonkar, Mozda Collective, India;
22. David Boys, Public Services International, France;
23. Ron Sawyer, SARAR Transformación SC, México;
24. Himanshu Thakkar, South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People (SANDRP), India;
25. Juan Hoffmaister, Third World Network, Costa Rica;
26. Ratan Bhandari, Water and Energy Users' Federation-Nepal (WAFED), Nepal.