



## Declaration on the use of sustainability indicators

### WHEREAS

- the environment is endowed with its own integrity and dynamic balance; and
- each and every person and the communities of peoples bear a responsibility for the care of the environment; and
- the International Federation of Environmental Health (IFEH) is committed to caring for the environment in the interest of world health; and
- IFEH in pursuing this commitment recognises the need for sustainability<sup>1</sup> indicators to provide benchmarks for progress in this area; and
- IFEH recognising the dignity of the human person and in keeping with the principles of social justice, supports the Aarhus Convention<sup>2</sup> and, in particular, the principle of the right of citizens to "*access to information on the environment*"; and
- IFEH strongly endorses the use of sustainability indicators to measure and assess progress toward sustainability; and
- IFEH understands that sustainability indicators are multidimensional as well as sectoral measures by which it becomes possible to show the development and links among a community's economy, environment, health, cultural and social conditions; and
- IFEH understands sustainability indicators to be indicators or frameworks of indicators that follow the Bellagio<sup>3</sup> principles; and

<sup>1</sup> **Sustainability:** development today must not undermine the development and environment needs of present and future generations.

<sup>2</sup> United National Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision- Making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters – done at Aarhus Denmark 25th June 1998

<sup>3</sup> In 1996, in cooperation with a group of leading international practitioners, the International

- to be effective, sustainability indicators should be easy to understand, relevant, reliable and based on accessible data; and
- IFEH acknowledges that citizens and communities should be able to access information which is presented on the basis of sustainability indicators; and
- IFEH holds that Citizens and communities should be able to participate in the selection of sustainability indicators so that they are meaningful to them; and
- IFEH recognises that providing citizens and communities with access to information is a mark of good governance and a prerequisite for sustainable development; and
- IFEH believes that only by using indicators will it be possible to decide objectively whether changes over time represent a move towards or away from sustainability; and that it is only by having this knowledge that it will be possible to respond in the most effective way; and
- IFEH believes that it is only by relying on robust indicator values that specific targets can be set and effective solutions implemented; and
- IFEH initiated a project on Sustainability Indicators based on international sharing, co-operation and participation which is now entering a new phase in co-operation with other international partners; and now

#### Therefore, the IFEH

- Calls upon local, regional and national authorities responsible for environment and health, in conjunction with their citizens, to set up effective monitoring systems, using sustainability indicators; and
- Calls upon its members to actively encourage local, regional and national, authorities to establish such monitoring systems, to make them easily accessible to citizens and to share them through mechanisms such as the IFEH's project on sustainability indicators
- Encourages, in the establishment and implementation of such monitoring systems, the application of the social principles of solidarity<sup>4</sup> and subsidiarity<sup>5</sup>; and the enculturation<sup>6</sup> of the monitoring programmes to satisfy local circumstances

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Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) developed general guidelines for the practical assessment toward sustainable development, commonly known as the Bellagio Principles.

<sup>4</sup> **Solidarity:** the mindset that recognises the interdependence of all human beings

<sup>5</sup> **Subsidiarity:** decisions are taken as close as possible to the level at which they can be effectively implemented

<sup>6</sup> **Enculturation:** framing as to be sensitive and relevant to the culture