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in the context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication
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The EU and its Member States Common Responses to Questionnaire D of UNDESA as Contribution to UNCSD2012

D.1 Is there a common consensus among policy makers in your country on the meaning of the term "green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication"? If so, how is it defined? (If relevant . please provide any official publications or analytical studies on the concept of green economy or its operational or social implications, together with a short abstract)

- What are the main examples of green economy policies that are currently in place in your country?
- Which policies or types of policy, do you consider to be most effective in promoting a green economy and why?
- Are poverty and other social impacts explicitly considered in the design of green economy policies? If so, how?

The UNCSD 2012 conference should develop a common understanding of the concepts and instruments related to the theme Green Economy and its benefits and challenges, firmly embedded in the context of Sustainable Development and poverty eradication. In particular, it should present best practices and develop recommendations and options for its implementation, taking into consideration the varying needs of industrialized countries, emerging economies and developing countries

The EU and its Member States consider that UNEP's definition presented in the 'Introduction to the Green Economy Report' can be a starting point for our thinking about Green Economy in the context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication (GESDPE):

A green economy is one in which the vital links between economy, society, and environment are taken into account and in which the transformation of production processes, production and consumption patterns while contributing to a reduction per unit in reduced waste, pollution, and the use of resources, materials and energy, waste and pollution emission will revitalize and diversify economies, create decent employment opportunities, promote sustainable trade, reduce poverty, and improve equity and income distribution.

This definition is helpful as it encompasses both the 'environmental' angle of the topic as well as the social and economic dimensions, which is a constitutive part of the topic as formulated in the Agenda 21 resolution.

The concept of GESDPE is a step forward in the field of sustainable development, which calls for respecting the finite resources of the planet and

the international social agenda as formulated in the Millennium Development Goals, the international environmental agenda and the Rio principles. Economic growth has to be decoupled from the ongoing rundown of our natural capital and, rather than an end in itself, has to be regarded as a means to securing human progress.

Whilst green economy aims to contribute to sustainable development, it is not sufficient for sustainable development and is not in any way a substitute for sustainable development. A green economy needs to be promoted jointly with the social dimension of sustainable development in order to have a positive social impact. Thus rather than replacing sustainable development, green economy should be understood as a set of tools and a roadmap to accelerate and facilitate a transition to an economy that is consistent with sustainable development, integrating social, economic and environmental concerns.

The green economy agenda is now developing as a multistakeholder agenda. However actions are still needed at the individual, local, regional, national and international levels to make this transition to a GESDPE a reality. Consistency between all these levels is important.

There is a need to make concrete substantial progress on this theme as a contribution to significantly closing the remaining gaps in implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development. In this context, the European Union and its Member States seek to engage in a constructive dialogue to develop a common understanding of this theme in order to speed up subsequent action to implement the existing international agenda.

Approaches to Green Economy will have to take into account differences between countries and therefore will need to offer certain flexibility. In this respect, the international community needs to build on our commitments on global poverty eradication, taking into account the diverse socio-economic contexts in developing countries, emerging economies and developed countries while also addressing the social impacts of proposed measures.

The EU and its Member States so far have highlighted, inter alia, the following elements for GESDPE: low carbon economy, sustainable use of natural assets, resource efficiency (including resources like energy, raw materials, food, water, space and biodiversity), building resilience to climate change, sustainable consumption and production patterns, private sector and stakeholder involvement, sustainable public procurement, developing indicators to measure progress towards sustainable development. This will be driven by investment in technologies and infrastructure, which requires skills for green jobs and addressing social and equity concerns associated with these.

D.10 Based on all of the above, what is (are) the key outcome(s) you think could emerge from the UN Conference on Sustainable Development with respect to a 'green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication?'

Based on discussions at the Preparatory Meeting on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD 2012) and on analytical work of international organizations on green economy, there is already a very useful set of suggestions for possible outcomes of the conference. They vary from very general and political to very specific and hands on. Based on these suggestions, the EU can envisage the following outcomes on the GEDSPE theme at UNCSD 2012:

General outcomes:

1. A global commitment and common understanding of Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication. Clarity that this concept will contribute to the aim of sustainable development and that a transition is needed to an economy which acknowledges the finite resources of the planet and social and equity needs as committed to by the international community. This implies a renewed commitment to sustainable development and poverty eradication. This will require renewed efforts by governments, international organisations and civil society including the private sector.
2. A UN Green Economy Road Map which clarifies and stimulates the steps which are needed on the national and international level in order to remove the obstacles to implement a GESDPE. This UN Green Economy Road Map could include a timeline, the identification of key actors, (voluntary) targets and a monitoring mechanism.
3. A toolbox or best practice guide of needed actions, instruments and policies which transform the concepts related to GESDPE to real action and can be implemented by Member States or individual companies or other organisations after the conference. Such a toolbox should take into consideration the varying needs and practices of industrialized countries, emerging economies and developing countries. economies.

In addition, agreements on specific topics could be achieved, such as on indicators for GESDPE, on the measurement of well-being, on standards for green products and on other specific issues that require international response. The interlinkages between the themes GESDPE and "Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development" should also be further explored and strengthened. The strengthening of international governance structures for environment and sustainable development could help the transition to a green economy.

D.11 What is the relationship of green economy policies to other policies and policy domains (e.g. poverty, growth, employment, trade etc.)? Are there cases of conflict and if so, how have these been addressed?

The economy depends on the earth's natural assets and on healthy and educated people for its productivity. This shows that the theme GESDPE is very much linked to most other policy domains.

A very important domain is consumption and production policy. The international negotiations on the 10 Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) on Sustainable Consumption and Production are going to be concluded at CSD-19 in May 2011 to implement the very broad goal of changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns globally. As such this framework should also be considered as a major response to the need to green the economies worldwide while addressing social concerns.

Other domains are also addressed in the great amount of international work related to GESDPE, such as reports of UNEP, the preparation of an OECD Green Growth Strategy, ILO work on green jobs and upcoming recommendations of the UN High Level Panel on Global Sustainability.

It should be noted that the transition to a GESDPE addresses environmental and social needs explicitly and will provide new economic opportunities but also hamper some existing economic activities. Enhancing the attention paid to social, environmental and equity concerns in the economic realm will possibly influence trade and a number of other policy areas.

In particular, GESDPE by its own nature very strongly linked with development policies and with the aim to meet the MDGs. It reflects the realization, that even though economic growth is an important objective, especially for developing countries, the source of growth is also very relevant. A resource efficient low carbon growth takes environmental concerns into account, while at the same time strengthens competitiveness and long-term growth.

Meeting the development goals in the spheres of energy security, food security and drinking-water access depends critically on the ongoing availability of resources in sufficient quantities and of sufficient quality. We have to see the sustainable management of scarce and valuable resources, such as water, in relation to the ecological growth of core economic sectors, such as energy and agriculture, and as fundamental to a sustainable path of economic development.

A GESDPE will thus contribute to sustainable development, but without replacing the aim of sustainability. Green economy policies will need to demonstrate that they can have positive impacts not only on the environment, but also on employment, wellbeing and poverty reduction. Also, a transition to a GESDPE calls for a policy mix of supportive measures in all sectors concerning a number of barriers which need to be overcome in order to make the needed global transition.

Examples include:

- Externalities, like social and environmental costs not taken into account by the current economic system, leading to suboptimal policy and business decisions.
- Financial and policy systems shaped in such a way that individual and business decisions tend to put relatively little weight on the future, leading to underinvestment in innovation and sustainable solutions. To overcome this obstacle, economic decision making should much more work with value chain and full life-cycle of products (looking at extraction, production, consumption, waste and possible re-use and recycling) and the environmental and social impacts of the products.
- To a large degree we are locked into existing infrastructure, patterns of behavior, policies and business models. This path dependency is an obstacle to necessary structural change. This can not be overcome completely, but innovation leading to new technologies, new processes improving eco-efficiency and new business models contributes to overcoming the lock in effect.
- Even when more sustainable technologies and infrastructures are developed an important hurdle is the skills of the work force. To overcome this hurdle retraining and skills support will be needed to create new green and decent jobs and other good social conditions in all economic sectors.
- Uncertainty about future policies is a major hurdle for private companies to invest more strongly in sustainable solutions. It helps to involve the private sector and civil society in the development of long term policies and commitments including the work on a GESDPE.

Each of these barriers needs to be addressed carefully when designing GESDPE policies in order to identify the cases of potential conflict and to solve them beforehand, through relevant long term strategies at all levels, acknowledging that in the long run economic growth is only possible when we respect the planet's finite resources.