

Committee: Economic and Financial Committee

Issue: Establishing the framework to support the development of green economy

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INTRODUCTION

In our modern world, people seem to care more about their own personal well-being and financial stability than the environmental wellness of our planet. Thus, our society is based on egocentricity and financial hierarchy leading to endless possibilities of wars breaking out in the name of privilege. The best of both worlds' solution is the alternative economy we call green economy. Green economy aims for a combination of an advancing economy, social well-being and environmental wellness. For the past couple of years there has been some controversy over people's perception of the term due to confusion on the actual definition of green economy. It has become a debatable topic given that some groups reject the concept of green economy as a whole, yet others fully support it. It is a concept perceived as a utopic scheme given that there is not sufficient economic growth unless minor to major environmental damage has been done. A main factor that causes people not to accept and support green economy, as a whole, is that they cannot detect a fall in consumption in our technology-based , manufacturing age. On the other hand, those who support it believe that it is the best of both worlds stating it will equally benefit the economy while keeping the environment healthy. It is crucial that the world adapts to the concept of green economy given it is the most eco-friendly way to the establishment of concrete bases to for growing economies.

The UN has made several attempts in the past decades to enforce green economy yet not every country has come to terms with the idea. Numerous conferences have been held and many organizations have been funded in order to highlight the benefits of green economy and suggest measures that could be taken.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Green Economy

Green Economy can be thought of as an alternative vision for growth and development; one that can generate growth and improvements in people's lives in ways consistent with sustainable development. A Green Economy promotes a triple bottom line: sustaining and advancing economic, environmental and social well-being.¹

Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.²

Social Well-Being

Social well-being is when we have good relationships, social stability and peace.³

Environmental Wellness

Environmental wellness inspires us to live a lifestyle that is respectful of our surroundings. This realm encourages us to live in harmony with the Earth by taking action to protect it. Environmental well-being promotes interaction with nature and your personal environment. Everyone can have a strong environmental conscious simply by raising their awareness.⁴

¹ Manish Bapna and John Talberth, What is a Green Economy, April 05 2011
<https://www.wri.org/blog/2011/04/qa-what-green-economy-0>

² http://www.3mfuture.com/sustainability/definition_sustainable_development.htm

³ <https://econation.co.nz/social-well-being/>

⁴ <https://shcs.ucdavis.edu/wellness/environmental>

Greenhouse Gas

Various gaseous compounds (such as carbon dioxide or methane) that absorb infrared radiation, trap heat in the atmosphere, and contribute to the greenhouse effect.⁵

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

A brief history of the green economy

The term 'green economy' was first conceived in *Blueprint for a Green Economy* (Pearce et al 1989) a key text for supporters of this still emerging discipline which is principally concerned with the economics of sustainable development. Since the 2008 launch of the United Nations GEI (Green Economy Initiative), one out of nine joint crisis initiatives, both misunderstandings and unclear definitions have been generated. A number of other terms, including 'green growth' and 'greening the economy', have also been widely adopted and used interchangeably in connection with an ever increasing number of economic sectors, such as energy and water, and concepts such as the polluter pays principle and life cycle analysis.⁶

The concept of green growth stresses the importance of colliding economic and environmental policies in a manner that highlights the opportunities for new sources of economic development while avoiding unsustainable pressure on the quality and quantity of natural assets. The transition towards a green economy involves a mixture of measures starting from economic instruments like taxes, subsidies and trading schemes, through regulative policies to the setting of standards for non-economic measures like voluntary approaches and information supply. Resource efficiency, a necessary criterion for a green economy, though usually insufficient, permits resource use to a certain extent and has been adopted by most countries in recent decades (OECD, 2011c).

Compared to green economy, measures for resource efficiency are easier to outline (UNEP, 2010a). At the politico-economic level, indicators like gross domestic product per resource use highlight the link between resource use and economic output. Still, variations in interpretation remain, with only a few countries formally defining the term 'resources' in policy. Some embody both renewable and non-renewable resources, whereas others use a

⁵ Merriam-Webster, definition of greenhouse gas, 1975, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/greenhouse%20gas>

⁶ <https://www.eea.europa.eu/publications/europes-environment-aoa/chapter3.xhtml>

narrower term 'raw materials' which covers fuel reserves. Neither a transparent definition nor a typical understanding of the term 'resource efficiency' seems to be in site (EEA, 2011).

Forms of Green Economy

- **Tourism**

The Tourism Background report is an extended version of the Tourism Chapter in the Green Economy Report (GER) which makes the case for investments in greener and more sustainable tourism as a way to create jobs and reduce poverty while reducing environmental risks.⁷ According to the UN GER, the greening of tourism, which involves significant investments in energy, water and waste systems, would stimulate job creation, especially in poorer communities, with increased local hiring and sourcing and have a spill-over effect on other areas of the economy. The direct economic distribution of tourism to local communities would also increase; maximizing the amount of tourist spending that is retained by the local economy. Lastly, a green tourism-based economy would ensure significant environmental benefits including reductions in water consumption, energy use and CO2 emissions. Given tourism's sheer size and reach, even small changes towards greening can have significant impacts.⁸

- **Agriculture**

Agriculture provides significant opportunities for growth, investment and jobs to help make this happen. Everyone needs agriculture. Agriculture feeds our entire population and produces fibers for clothing, feed for livestock and bioenergy. Particularly in the developing world, agriculture contributes significantly to GDP growth, leads the way in poverty reduction and accounts for the lion's share of employment opportunities, especially for women. Agriculture also has one of the highest potentials for reducing carbon emissions and helping vulnerable people adapt to climate change.

⁷ <http://www2.unwto.org/publication/tourism-green-economy-background-report>

⁸ http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/sites/all/files/pdf/unwto_greenecomomy_leaflet.pdf

The debate about green economy

At first glance, green economy appears to be a simple idea, whose time has come. Surely we all want to preserve natural resources and minimize pollution and Greenhouse Gas emissions. There is, however, no scientific agreement yet on how to achieve a “green economy”, nor is there an international accord on what it means and how to move towards it.

A “green economy” gives the impression of an economy that is environmentally-friendly, sensitive to the need to maintain natural resources, minimize pollution and emissions during the production process, and promotes environmentally-friendly lifestyles and consumption patterns. The difficult questions are whether the acquisition of such an economy constrains other aspects, including economic growth of poor countries and social goals such as poverty eradication and job creation.

The Rio Summit had partially answered most of the questions related to how to address and enforce green economy by providing a basic framework – that the environment must be integrated within development, and not be taken separately. Thus, the need to protect the environment should not be at the expense of the developing countries' right to development. From this arose the concept of “sustainable development”, with its three pillars: environmental protection, economic development and social development. It recognized the need not only for international policies and actions, especially finance and technology transfer, but also for support for developing countries to move towards a sustainable development pathway. The Rio Summit established the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities”.

The more economically developed countries, having contributed the most to global environmental damage, have the responsibility to take the lead in changing their own economic model and in providing developing countries with the finance and technology to move to an environmentally friendly system. The developing countries would like the “green economy” concept to be placed well within this sustainable development framework of the Rio Summit – and not to replace it. While acknowledging the positive aspects of developing the green economy concept, they also point to the risks.

The first risk is that the “green economy” is defined in a one-dimensional manner, and promoted in a purely “environmental” manner, without considering fully the development and equity dimensions. The second risk is that a “one size fits all” approach is taken, namely

treating all countries in the same manner. This leads to failures either for the environment, development or both. The levels and stages of economic and political development of every country must be fully taken into consideration. The third risk is that the “green economy” is inappropriately used by countries for trade protectionist purposes. In particular, MED countries may use this to justify selfish trade measures against the products of developing countries, or to impose standards that have not been agreed to. A fourth risk is that the “green economy” is used as new conditionality on developing countries for aid, loans, and debt rescheduling or debt relief. This may pressurize affected developing countries to adopting one-dimensional environmental measures rather than sustainable development policies. Other issues when considering the “green economy” include what is the role of the public sector and the private sector, and the role of regulatory mechanisms and market mechanisms.

There is a long and large debate on these issues. Many believe that the environmental crisis is a result and sign of “market failure”; that the private sector and markets left to themselves have brought about resource depletion, pollution and Greenhouse Gas emissions characterize the environmental crisis. Thus, regulation of the private sector is important. Regulatory mechanisms such as limits to pollution and emissions, pesticides in food, water contamination, and use of environmental taxes and fines are thus seen as crucial policy instruments that should be major or central components in promoting the “green economy”. There are many challenges facing developing countries in moving their economies to more environmentally friendly paths. On the one hand, this should not prevent the attempt to urgently incorporate environmental elements into economic development. On the other hand, the various obstacles should be recognized and the developing countries should be supported internationally. The conditions must be established that make it possible for countries, especially developing countries, to move towards a “green economy.” Thus, what seems to be a simple idea, the “green economy”, is actually complex in terms of policy prescriptions and especially when it is the subject of international negotiations.⁹

⁹ <http://www.twn.my/title2/sdc2012/sdc2012.110101.htm>

MAJOR COUNTRIES AND ORGANISATIONS INVOLVED

China

China is set to become the world's renewable energy superpower. Constant development in renewable energy all around the globe is set to enhance China's power while eroding the impact of major oil exporters such as Russia and Saudi Arabia, based on the new report on the geopolitical consequences

of the changing energy landscape. Having a leading role in renewable energy as well as alternative technologies such as anaerobic digestion, Beijing is now such an influence that other countries will find hard to counter.¹⁰

Kenya

Kenya's president Uhuru Kenyatta has announced plans to transform the country to 100% green energy by 2020, aiming to help alleviate climate change by decreasing the country's carbon footprint while making room for many much needed jobs. Around 70% of the nation's installed electrical capacity comes from renewable energy sources and it was a co-host along with Japan and Canada for the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference in November.¹¹

Brazil

Renewable energy is on the rise in Brazil. In an average month, renewable energy sources represent 81.9% of the installed capacity of electricity generation in Brazil (according to data from the Ministry of Mines and Energy). Hydropower is still by far the main source of energy in the country and represents 63.7% of all electricity generated. This is a decrease from the usual average of around 70% of the total electricity matrix, as hydroelectricity has come under increasing opposition from communities and environmentalists. In addition, the production of hydroelectricity has been reduced due to the recent years of drought in the Amazon and to the south of the country, and cases of corruption such as bribes amounting to millions in Belo Monte dam project (which has been also criticized for displacing indigenous

¹⁰ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/dominicdudley/2019/01/11/china-renewable-energy-superpower/#324dba31745a>

¹¹ <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/12/kenya-wants-to-run-entirely-on-green-energy-by-2020/>

communities). Brazil has therefore begun to import electricity from countries such as Argentina and Uruguay.¹²

Tunisia

Tunisia has good renewable energy potential, especially solar and wind, which the government is trying to tap to ensure a safe energy future. The country has very good solar energy potential which ranges from 1800 kWh/m² per year in the North to 2600kWh/m² per year in the South. The total installed capacity of the renewable power grid was around 342 MW in 2016 (245 MW of wind energy, 68 MW of hydropower and 15 MW of PV), which is hardly 6% of the total capacity. In 2009, the Tunisian government adopted “Plan Solaire Tunisien” or Tunisia Solar Plan to achieve 4.7 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030 which includes the use of solar photovoltaic systems, solar water heating systems and solar concentrated power units. The Tunisian solar plan is being implemented by STEG Énergies Renouvelables (STEG RE) which is a subsidiary of state-utility STEG and responsible for the development of alternative energy sector in the country. The total investment required to implement the Tunisian Solar Program plan have been estimated at \$2.5 billion, including \$175 million from the National Fund, \$530 million from the public sector, \$1,660 million from private sector funds, and \$24 million from international cooperation, all of which will be spent over the period of 2012 – 2016. Around 40 percent of the resources will be devoted to the development of energy export infrastructure.

Egypt

Even though Egypt ranks 3rd in the most polluted counties in the world, it has made attempts to create a green economy through means other than technology. On Cairo’s rooftops and uninhabitable land, the public has united with the vision to cultivate a different sort of development in the city. Each and every individual is responsible for this new growth that combines development and environmental consciousness to achieve food secure neighborhoods. FAO, the Food and Agricultural Organization stated in The State of Food Insecurity in the World Report (2011) that the poor are vulnerable to an increase in food costs. With that information in mind, the Egyptian Government cooperated with FAO to launch the Green Food from Green Roofs project. This project showcased a different approach to developing food production. This operates at a local level and it is made clear that each group of individuals aims to enchain a wider reaction within the Cairo community. They also seek to

¹² <https://energytransition.org/2018/11/brazilian-energy/>

adapt and develop current systems. Schaduf focuses on developing hydroponic agriculture which grows products in mineral rich water without the need for soil. Many countries should follow in Egypt's footsteps since it is clear that green economy can be achieved with means not limited to technology.¹³

United Kingdom

The Green Deal is a UK Government initiative that aims to reduce CO2 emissions. The UK is unfortunately one of the highest ranking countries in CO2 emission. Although the government has generated this initiative, the British have green apathy meaning that they are more concerned about personal job stability and finance than environmental issues. The Government is now set to showcase the initiative and enforce the green mindset to its people otherwise it will fail and biodiversity in the Kingdom will become extinct.¹⁴

World Green Economy Organization

The World Green Economy Organization (WGEO) emerged in response to the priorities and concerns identified in 2012 at the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - an organization intended to support emerging global actions towards the green, low-carbon, climate-resilient development model. WGEO seeks to promote the widespread acceptance and increased importance of the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, by linking financing, technology, capacity-building and all other elements of the enabling environment for green economy.¹⁵

United Nations Environment Programme

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) is the voice for the environment within the United Nations system. UNEP acts as a catalyst, advocate, educator and facilitator to promote the wise use and sustainable development of the global environment. UNEP's work

¹³ Egypt: A New 'Roof-Top Revolution' Emerges, Catriona Knapman, March 2012 <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/environment-energy/www-ee-library/mainstreaming/Green%20Economy%20in%20Action/Green%20Economy%20Compilation%20Report.pdf>

¹⁴ The Green Deal is going to Revolutionize Green Industry in the UK, Ciaran Oliver, May 2012 <https://www.undp.org/content/dam/aplaws/publication/en/publications/environment-energy/www-ee-library/mainstreaming/Green%20Economy%20in%20Action/Green%20Economy%20Compilation%20Report.pdf>

¹⁵ <https://worldgreeneconomy.org/about/>

encompasses assessing global, regional and national environmental conditions and trends; developing international and national environmental instruments; and strengthening institutions for the wise management of the environment. UNEP has a long history of contributing towards the development and implementation of environmental law through its normative work or through the facilitation of intergovernmental platforms for the development of multilateral environmental agreements; principles and guidelines that are aimed at addressing global environmental challenges.¹⁶

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

Date	Description of Event
1972 Stockholm Conference	United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, namely the Stockholm Conference, the first United Nations (UN) conference that focused on international environmental issues. The conference, held in Stockholm, Sweden, from June 5 to 16, 1972, reflected a growing interest in conservation issues worldwide and laid the foundation for global environmental governance.
1987 Brundtland Report	The Brundtland Report stated that critical global environmental problems were primarily the result of the enormous poverty of the South and the non-sustainable patterns of consumption and production in the North. It called for a strategy that united development and the environment – described by the now-common term «sustainable development». ¹⁷
1992 Earth Summit	The Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro was unprecedented for a UN conference, in terms of both its size and the scope of its concerns. Twenty years after the first global environment conference, the UN sought to help Governments rethink economic development and find ways to halt the destruction of irreplaceable natural resources and pollution of the planet. The message reflected the complexity of the problems facing us: that poverty as well as excessive consumption by affluent populations place damaging stress on the environment.
2012 Rio +20 Conference	The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development - or Rio+20 - took place in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on 20-22 June 2012. It resulted in a focused political outcome document which contains

¹⁶<https://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/un-and-the-rule-of-law/united-nations-environment-programme/>

¹⁷<https://www.are.admin.ch/are/en/home/sustainable-development/international-cooperation/2030agenda/un-milestones-in-sustainable-development/1987--brundtland-report.html>

	clear and practical measures for implementing sustainable development.
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UN INVOLVEMENT: RELEVANT RESOLUTIONS, TREATIES AND EVENTS

- 2012 Rio + 20 Conference

In Rio, Member States decided to launch a process to develop a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will build upon the Millennium Development Goals and converge with the post 2015 development agenda. The Conference also adopted groundbreaking guidelines on green economy policies. Governments also decided to establish an intergovernmental process under the General Assembly to prepare options on a strategy for sustainable development financing.

- Agenda 21,

Agenda 21, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, and the Statement of principles for the Sustainable Management of Forests were adopted by more than 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3 to 14 June 1992.¹⁸

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO SOLVE THE ISSUE

International Conference on Green Economy and Sustainable Development

ICGESD 2019: International Conference on Green Economy and Sustainable Development aims to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Green Economy and Sustainable Development. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of Green Economy and Sustainable Development.¹⁹

¹⁸ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/outcomedocuments/agenda21>

¹⁹ [ICGESD 2019: International Conference on Green Economy and Sustainable Development aims to bring together leading academic scientists, researchers and research scholars to exchange and share their experiences and research results on all aspects of Green Economy and Sustainable Development. It also provides a premier interdisciplinary platform for researchers, practitioners and educators to](#)

Rio +20 2012 Conference

The third and final meeting of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD, or Rio+20), Pre-Conference Informal Consultations Facilitated by the Host Country, and the UNCSD was convened back-to-back in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 13-22 June 2012. During their ten days in Rio, government delegations concluded the negotiations on the Rio outcome document, titled “The Future We Want.” Representatives from 191 UN member states and observers, including 79 Heads of State or Government, addressed the general debate, and approximately 44,000 badges were issued for official meetings, a Rio+20 Partnerships Forum, Sustainable Development Dialogues, SD-Learning and an estimated 500 side events in RioCentro, the venue for the Conference itself.

In closing the Conference, UNCSD President Dilma Rousseff (Brazil) stressed that Rio+20 was the most participatory conference in history and was a “global expression of democracy.” Taking place in parallel to the official events, approximately 3,000 unofficial events were organized throughout Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Governments and the Rio Conventions organized Pavilions showcasing their experiences and best practices. A Forum on Science, Technology and Innovation for Sustainable Development, a Global Town Hall, a People’s Summit, the World Congress on Justice, Governance and Law for Environmental Sustainability and spontaneous street actions were just a few of the many events around the historic city of Rio de Janeiro, discussing the Rio+20 themes and the broader requirements for sustainable development implementation.²⁰

Sustainable Blue Economy Conference

Over 4,000 participants from around the world met from November 26 to 28, 2018 at the Sustainable Blue Economy Conference in Nairobi to learn how to build a blue economy that:

- Harnesses the potential of our oceans, seas, lakes and rivers to improve the lives of all, particularly people in developing states, women, youth and indigenous peoples
- Leverages the latest innovations, scientific advances and best practices to build prosperity while conserving our waters for future generations

[present and discuss the most recent innovations, trends, and concerns as well as practical challenges encountered and solutions adopted in the fields of Green Economy and Sustainable Development.](https://enb.iisd.org/vol27/enb2751e.html)

²⁰ <https://enb.iisd.org/vol27/enb2751e.html>

At this occasion, UN Environment/Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP) and Plan Bleu/Regional Activity Centre (UN Environment/MAP) joined efforts with the Secretariat of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) and WWF Mediterranean Marine Initiative to organize a joint side-event entitled “The Regional Dimension of a Sustainable and Inclusive Blue Economy: the Model of the Mediterranean”.

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

Education

Since the youth of today are our future, we are responsible for giving them concrete foundations from early on. The educational system should stress the importance of perceiving our planet and giving back what we take from it. Showing all aspects and various definitions of the term green economy and letting people see why they should support it are also crucial since saving our planet while benefiting from it should not be forced but wanted. Plus, it could be beneficial if young elementary students came into contact with the environment, learning how to love it thus shaping an opinion that will help the enhancement of green economy in the future.

Raising Awareness

We cannot place our future and the future of our planet solely in the hands of the next generation; if we want results, we need to take action. Many people are still in the dark when it comes to the concept of green economy and are unable to support it. Therefore, taking advantage of social media platforms and influential people will help to motivate different age groups, leading to a more inclusive attempt.

Agriculture

A way in which we could implement a greener economy is through the enhancement of agriculture. Agriculture is basically the practice of cultivating soil and farming animals in order to produce goods either for one to live off or for one to sell. It would be ideal to implement agriculture into our daily lives, because it is a means that benefits one financially and empowers economies per capita while helping the environment.

Governmental interference

Governments could enforce a strict bill of laws to minimize, if not eliminate, the pollution caused by factories or other forms of infrastructure. For example, groundwater pumping should be banned and all illegal works should face financial punishments.

Technological Development

Since in our modern world the main economy source is technology, adapting a greener view of technology would be ideal. Less harsh chemicals should be released into the air, technological advances not requiring petrol such as electronic cars should be introduced and steps to using recyclable substances to create technological devices that everyone uses should be taken. Enforcing a greener mindset through every purchase would lay the foundations for a green economy to be developed.

Functional Ecosystems

A great engine of renewable electricity are functional ecosystems. The preserving of biodiversity and the maintenance of ecosystems are concrete bases for renewable energy sources that could enforce green economy.

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