

UNCSD 2012, PrepCom 2, New York, 7.-8. March 2011.

Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

Statement by Norway.

Mr. Chairman,

Allow me to start by recalling a conclusion from a previous UN initiated meeting. It concluded that environmental problems have to be solved through continued development, in particular in developing countries. The meeting called for a redefinition of economic development objectives to include both environmental and social dimensions. It predicted that, inevitably, the environmental concerns will cast its shadow on all international economic relations, and stressed the importance of anticipating the adverse implications for international economic relations on the one hand, and the great opportunities which may open up on the other.

The meeting I am referring to is the 1971 Founex seminar that provided essential inputs to the 1972 Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment. While the world looks very different from 40 years ago, the reference shows that the basic challenges we are addressing in 2011 have been known and well defined for a long time - as have the basic approaches and remedies to address them.

So when we today discuss what we now call "green economy", we are far from starting something entirely new. What puts us in a better position than the delegates in 1971 is the vast body of increased knowledge, experiences and technological advances that we can draw on when addressing these issues today. At the same time, the environmental challenges have gained in seriousness and we see clearly how we are running out of alternatives to a greener development; the environmental consequences of the current economic practices increasingly hold back growth, development and poverty eradication, and sometimes prevents access to markets.

So, Mr Chairman, we have known for 40 years that addressing environmental concerns must equally be about development, that we are not facing a choice among the two but the imperative of integrating the two or failing at both. The difficult choices are about which groups of people to benefit, at what point in time. Such difficult questions are not resolved once and for all, but is something we have to face on a regular basis.

Increased investments in the green economy can be stimulated through a suite of well known policies (derived from a range of concepts, disciplines and principles.) A combination of market-based mechanisms and regulatory structures is often needed. The appropriate policy mix will depend on national circumstances. Measures include public investments, green accounting, subsidies, taxes, charges, sustainable trade, creation of new markets, planning, standards, regulations, technological innovations and transfers and, not least, capacity building.

The task ahead is therefore not to invent or define something entirely new. It is about collecting, analysing and presenting the various policy components of a greener economy in a manner which makes it possible to utilize current knowledge and experiences in a practical way, tailored to specific national circumstances. We must ensure we have the systems, the institutions, capacity and the knowledge to make the right choices and broker the various interests wisely.

At the first PrepCom, my delegation suggested that a deliverable from Rio 2012 could be to prepare a more coherent and easily available body of knowledge of building blocks of a green economy, to be available for national governments to draw from in their specific national settings. The relationship of these building blocks to the existing or future enabling framework for international cooperation, must be clarified to reach a much more concrete phase of the efforts to support a greening of the economy, including such elements as mobilizing increased investments and other resources, technology and capacity building, as well as sound and agreed policy principles.

Against this background we support the Secretary-General's proposals for developing a database on best practices. We also support the proposal for further work on analysis and models, based on different political and macro-economic tools, as well as continued efforts to improve governance and transparency with regard to management and distribution of incomes derived from natural resources.

In taking this work forward, we need a practical approach. One way of doing that could be to focus on a few sectors of key importance both for development and poverty eradication, as well as for the environment.

The energy sector is one good candidate for such an approach. 2012 has been designated by the UN as the "International year of sustainable energy for all". Today 1,4 billion people live without access to electricity, and 2,8 billion are still expected to use traditional biomass for cooking by 2030 if current trends continue, leading to health effects that cause an estimated 1,5 million premature deaths per year.

Work is already under way, such as the "Vienna Energy Forum" in June this year, to prepare for the international year of sustainable energy and to rectify the current situation. As a contribution to these efforts, Norway, in cooperation with IEA, will in October this year host a high level conference entitled "Energy for all - financing access for the poor". The conference is being prepared in close consultation with the UN system, and it is our intention that the outcomes from this conference can provide important and practical inputs to the Rio 2012 process, including in relation to the theme of green economy.

Mr. Chairman, we believe a deliverable from Rio 2012 that establishes a realistic target for achieving sustainable energy access for all would constitute an ambitious and important contribution to sustainable development and poverty eradication in the coming decades.

Thank you.