

**Regional Preparatory Meeting for the United Nations Conference on
Sustainable Development**

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**A green economy in the context of
sustainable development and poverty eradication**

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Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen

First of all let me thank the ECE Secretariat for giving me the opportunity to address this distinguished audience and to open this session focused on the theme ‘*A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication*’.

All of us members of this Region of the United Nations meet here today and tomorrow to discuss some important issues that concern the regional dimension in the preparatory process of Rio+20, but we meet also in a spirit of reflection towards the urgent need for all countries to catalyze a definitive response to the sustainability challenges we are facing in these years.

In June next year, two decades after the memorable Earth Summit that in some ways set the course of contemporary sustainable development, world leaders will gather again to seize the opportunity for advancing sustainability. Yet, since that time, the world has changed dramatically: the world of the here and now is light-years from the world of 1992, under geopolitical, societal, economic and environmental point of view.

The «globalization» and the growing integration of the global economy has brought about incessant flows of goods and services, capital, technology and information across national borders.

As stated by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan in the year 2000, *«the central challenge we face today is to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's people, instead of leaving billions of them behind in squalors».*

Indeed, many of the indicators of sustainable development are heading towards an alarming level and the most challenging and adverse scenarios postulated in the Stockholm conference, predicted in the Club of Rome Report on “*The limit to Growth*”, and highlighted in Rio 1992 are today fast becoming a reality.

In this general framework, the appreciation of the urgency of reorienting our current economic models has been widely recognized: there is the need to rethink development and to foster the transition towards an economy that is inclusive, equitable and strongly oriented to poverty eradication.

In the next following months, when the negotiation in preparation of Rio+20 will enter its crucial phase, the main question will not be the ‘*if*’, but rather the ‘*when*’ and the ‘*how*’ a green economy can help accelerate the progress towards sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The ‘*when*’ question poses the challenge to make the Spirit of Rio to live on, and to draft a comprehensive agenda that outlines a path for keeping humanity’s footprint within ecological planetary boundaries; the ‘*how*’ question asks for the range of tools that can be put forward in order to implement concrete actions on specific topics (such as biodiversity, energy, forestry, water, fisheries, soil, chemicals and waste, oceans, cities).

The achievement of a positive and outstanding outcome on this theme in Rio next year would guarantee the identification of new opportunities, the launch of investments in protection and sustainable management of natural resources, and a better synergy between economic and social development, and environmental protection.

Mr. Chair,

The transition towards a green economy cannot be achieved without changing our current patterns of consumption and production. Last year at CSD19, notwithstanding the unfortunate failure to reach the final decision, we experienced an outstanding consensus and spirit of mutual cooperation among different negotiating groups that brought us to an agreed text for a 10 year framework of programs on SCP. Such text, I hope, could represent one of milestone agreements guiding us through the next decade on a more sustainable path.

Independently on the tools and the instruments that will be adopted to ease the transition to a green economy, the responsibility of its correct and full implementation is not only global, but also regional and national, and governments as well as the private sector and civil society play a central role in it.

Mr. Chair,

Let me conclude by highlighting what I consider necessary to achieve to on green economy in the Rio+20 conference:

- The key role of the business sector in the transition to sustainable development has been already recognized in the Rio Declaration, in the Agenda 21 and in the Johannesburg Declaration, but needs to be further enhanced in Rio+20;
- A joint approach between traditional donors, emerging economies, international financial institutions (IFIs) and enterprises is needed;
- Public-private partnerships, which include the involvement of business sector for leveraging resources, can contribute to advance sustainable development;
- Rio+20 can further strengthen the cooperation between IFIs, business sector and the UN agencies, especially in the area of policy making and implementation;
- And finally, Rio+20 can recognize the importance of the business sector in bridging implementation gaps and in contributing to policy making at national, sub-regional and regional level.

The ECE Region can provide with important examples on this path: the greening of the industrial development, the spread over of renewable energies and the water protection are only some of the key transformations attained. But above all, the «Environment for Europe» process, the environmental performance reviews, the environmental treaties adopted mark the capability of the Region to set the agenda.

The real challenge in Rio next year will be to transform this agenda into commitments, so as to define a new future for us and for the next generations.

Let's work together to make this happens.

I thank you all.