

EUROPEAN ECO FORUM PRELIMINARY PROPOSAL
FOR ROUNDTABLE BETWEEN MINISTERS AND ENVIRONMENTAL NGOS
ON GREENING THE ECONOMY IN THE PAN-EUROPEAN REGION
AT BATUMI “ENVIRONMENT FOR EUROPE” MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE, JUNE 2016

WORKING DOCUMENT as of October 23, 2015

ORGANISATION:

European ECO Forum and other interested organisations

GENERAL OBJECTIVES:

- an interactive and open discussion between Ministers of Environment and Trade/Economy/Finances/Agriculture/Development and other related and environmental NGOs, trade unions, women and human right organisations, progressive business and other stakeholders about the leverages and the bottlenecks for achieving green economy on the regional and country level.
- discuss and exchange best practices and promising policies from the regions and ways to promote them more actively;
- discuss and define the partnership between governments, business and civil society

BACKGROUND:

Ministers at the Seventh Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Astana in 2011 agreed to take the lead in the transition to a green economy and to make a substantive contribution to the discussions on green economy within the context of sustainable development. Now that the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, including a new set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is adopted, it will give the member states of UNECE more reason to increase the ambition to make rapidly the transition into Sustainable Development. Green economy includes many objectives, namely conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems, sustainable food systems, minimum waste emissions, ecosystem services, integration of environmental and social costs in the price; tax shifts, sustainable consumption and production patterns; with a focus on human development, gender equality, distribution of wealth and well-being. The goals for the pan-European region on greening the economy should be totally in line with the global 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development. The proposed theme for the next EfE Ministerial conference in Batumi in June 2016 on greening the economy in the pan-European region could include issues related to MEAs, SCP, ESD, SEIS, water, environment and health and transport, environment and health – issues which are of the great value for both governments and civil society.

Trade can play an important role in every country. It is crucial that social development and environmental protection are at the heart of all trade policies. Trade is considered as an important tool to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and as a source of Financing for

Development. Coherence and mutual supportiveness among these three elements are important for transition to green economy and sustainable development.

Related to this European ECO Forum proposes the interactive Roundtable discussions on the following theme:

PROMOTING GREEN ECONOMY THROUGH TRADE [PROVISIONAL TITLES]

We propose to bring together Ministers of Environment and Trade/Economy/Finance/Agriculture/Development, civil society, progressive business, trade unions, academia representatives of the UN ECE region and discuss:

* **Opportunities and challenges:** Green economy and trade; Trade opportunities in the Green Economy (including several important sectors, like agriculture, water, waste, energy); How trade can help to transition to green economy and sustainable consumption and production rather than a being a barrier? What are challenges in these processes in countries? How we can reduce risks and maximize benefits? Role of WTO in transition to green economy and possible impact to different countries; How Regional and Bilateral Trade Agreements can foster green economy?

* **Best paths to sustainability:** Which legal frameworks, good practices of using trade policy tools and financial incentives to promote green economy, resource efficiency and productivity programs exist in the UNECE region? National and regional initiatives on SDG implementation plans.

* **Market Incentives:** Can trade and investment policies help in the transition to green economy; How to promote green investments? Efficient use of different incentives, like sustainable public procurement, environmental taxation, removal of environmentally harmful subsidies and green subsidies, etc..

* **Accountability, review and governance:** what are the most appropriate review and accountability mechanism? What experience can we use to assess impact of trade to environment and sustainable development (Sustainability Impact Assessment, other tools)??

* **Cooperation:** looking for synergies between different processes at pan-European and global levels (Efe, EUSDS, EU2020, UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, WTO, etc.) aiming at better cooperation among countries and regions on sustainability and green economy issues; How will civil society groups and other relevant stakeholders be actively engaged . Use the Batumi Conference as an opportunity to advocate proposed changes, and insist that greening the economy and sustainable development represents the only legitimate goal for international trade policy.

PARTICIPANTS:

High level round table with relevant Ministers, representatives of environmental civil society organisations, trade unions, women, youth, progressive business, scientists and other stakeholders invited by European ECO Forum.

The important criteria for selection of participants will be the proven experience and representative mandate in the discussed items and have a gender and regional balance.

FORMAT:

Interactive session (details will be decided at the later stage)

PREPARATORY MATERIALS:

Publication to help the discussion for the round table

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