

A stylized world map composed of a grid of grey dots, with several dots highlighted in red to indicate specific geographical locations.

## Really the Future We Want?

### Civil Society Voices on Rio+20

**NINA NETZER, CLAUDIA DETSCH, ARIELA GROSS, HENRIK MAIHACK,  
PETER OESTERDIEKHOFF AND SIDONIE WETZIG (EDS.)**

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- The upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, taking place in Rio de Janeiro, 20–22 June 2012, aims to reaffirm the principle of sustainable development and to forge international agreements to further it. In some cases, however, the interests and expectations of civil society actors on the one hand and political decision makers on the other vary considerably. These differences are evident from recent discussions on the zero draft for »The Future We Want«, the conference outcome document.
- The main topics of the conference – (1) A Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and (2) An institutional framework for sustainable development – are highly controversial. Many civil society actors and developing countries fear that the conference focus fails to address the real, structural causes of the multiple crises and that the Green Economy approach will lead to a »green protectionism« and »green washing« of existing capitalist structures. The absence of consideration of human rights and equity principles in the draft document has also been criticized.
- Given the concerns of civil society actors, their involvement in the Rio process is extremely important. Against this backdrop, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) hosted five regional preparatory conferences in Africa (Kenya), Asia (India), Europe (Brussels), Latin America (Ecuador), and the Middle East / North Africa (Tunisia) to formulate regional positions on the key topics of Rio+20. The conferences included participants from non-governmental organizations, trade unions, progressive parties, and regional organizations from 47 countries. This paper summarizes their recommendations and demands for the upcoming conference.



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# Really the Future We Want?

## Civil Society Voices on Rio+20

*Nina Netzer*

### 1. Background to Rio+20

At the 1992 World Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, environmental and development issues were for the first time jointly discussed within a broad international framework. From the conference emerged the concept of sustainable development, taking into account economic, environmental and social sustainability. Two decades later, participants will again gather in Brazil, 20–22 June 2012, for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), Rio+20. Developments since the first Earth Summit have been sobering: a growth model based on finite, carbon-intensive resources has led to surging energy prices, dwindling resources, and severe damage to the environment and climate in many countries. In addition to the environmental crisis, during the last few years the world has experienced a financial and economic crisis as well as a structural crisis in equity and justice, including growing inequalities within and between countries as well as an increase in poverty and hunger. The number of people starving was higher in 2012 than it was in 1992, and at approximately one billion, has reached a record high although global food production can adequately cover their needs. Even though the number of people living in extreme poverty declined in the past decades, it still amounts to approximately 1.4 billion. Already today, the world population consumes more resources than can be regrown or renewed and continued population growth will exacerbate this situation: Since the 1992 Rio conference, the world's population has grown by more than 1.5 billion people, from 5.5 billion to 7 billion, and is on track to increase to more than 9 billion by mid-century.

Rio+20 has set the objective of reaffirming and renewing the guiding principle of sustainable development and forging international agreements for it. It is thought that addressing the conferences two leading topics – (1) A Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and (2) An insti-

tutional framework for sustainable development – will advance comprehensive and just sustainable development worldwide. Some civil society actors and a number of governments, especially in developing countries, doubt, however, whether Rio+20 can make a real contribution to this endeavor.

### 2. Civil Society Concerns and Involvement in the Rio Process

The Rio+20 conference will be taking place at a point in time when debates over the need for global environmental, economic, and social structural change are receiving increasing attention in science and policy making as well as civil society. The interests and expectations of civil society actors on the one hand and political decision makers on the other vary considerably in some instances, as indicated by recent discussions on »The Future We Want«, the zero draft for the conference outcome document. In addition, there are conflicts of interest among different regions as well as differences between political actors and civil society within regions. The conflicts are especially salient regarding the Green Economy approach.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) defines a Green Economy as »one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities«, but many actors doubt whether the Green Economy concept lives up to the broad notion of sustainable development. Of particular note, developing and emerging countries as well as civil society groups around the globe believe a primary danger lies in new »green protectionism« in the form of ecolabels, customs duties, and border taxes for commodities not produced according to current environmental standards, patents, or intellectual property rights to green technologies as well as other trade barriers on the part of the industrial countries. Furthermore, they fear that financial assistance will be tied to ecologically based conditions. But also industrial

\* Nina Netzer works for the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Berlin, Germany. She is in charge of the working line »International Energy and Climate Policy«.

nations do not fully welcome the challenge of full-scale ecological structural change. They have concerns about their own competitiveness in a green world market and fear the loss of economic growth and jobs. Moreover, especially civil society actors argue that the Green Economy concept does not address the causes of today's and future crises, but instead will lead to a »green washing« of capitalist structures. They therefore are calling for greater emphasis on sustainable development rather than green growth. The Green Economy concept is also open to criticism on the grounds that it waters down the general principle of sustainable development by over-emphasizing the environmental-economics-dimension and its failure to take adequate account of the social dimension. The ecological restructuring culminating in a Green Economy is attributed overall with creating more and better jobs and increased material wealth. Critics, however, question the possibility of such automatism. A transition to green economic models creates enormous challenges in regard to the preservation and development of fair and appropriate industrial relations. From a global perspective, there is also the danger that in their capacity as pioneers, certain countries, regions, and industrial sectors will benefit from the green transformation while others will lag behind. Last but not least, the Green Economy that relies on an increase in material and energy efficiencies has not come up with a solution to the fundamental problem of the »rebound effect«, in which additional resource consumption and emissions eat away efficiency gains. As it addresses core questions of equity and justice, the debate on Green Economy reveals a crisis of confidence between developing and industrialised countries: For decades, the latter have achieved their economic growth and prosperity on the basis of energy and emission-intensive industrial sectors and the exploitation of finite resources. Further, they account for only 20 per cent of the world's population and are responsible for 46.4 of total global greenhouse emissions. Developing countries, on the other hand, in which 80 per cent of the world's population lives, merely cause 53.6 per cent of global emissions<sup>1</sup> – however, they suffer the most from the impact of global warming. Therefore, industrialised countries have to carry the main burden in restructuring economic systems and support developing countries amongst others with finance and technology.

1. Rogner, H.-H. et al. (2007): »Introduction. Climate Change 2007: Mitigation«, Contribution of Working Group III to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

In the run-up to Rio+20, two solutions have been discussed concerning an institutional framework for sustainable development: a strengthening of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and reform of the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD). Although civil society concerns on this issue are not as strong as on the Green Economy approach, there is still little consensus in respect to the reform of international governance structures in the area of sustainable development. General agreement exists that the UNEP's role should be strengthened, but the parties involved in negotiations do not agree on whether this should be achieved through a UNEP+ solution, providing the program greater financial and human resources as well as increased powers and responsibilities, or whether its status should be enhanced from a program to a full-fledged UN organization (United Nations Environment Organization (UNEO) or World Environment Organization (WEO)). The same applies to the CSD, which has played a rather insignificant role to date and could be transformed into a council for sustainable development. Not much time is left, however, for formulating steps for implementation and forging a consensus among the states involved.

Besides the criticism on the Green Economy approach, many civil society actors are also concerned that the current draft of »The Future We Want« lacks reference to human rights obligations and equity principles. Given these concerns, the strong involvement of civil society actors in the Rio process is extremely important. Agenda 21 from Rio 1992 asserts that the participation of identified individuals, groups, and organizations is critical to achieving sustainable development: women; children and youth; indigenous peoples; non-governmental organizations; local authorities; workers and trade unions; business and industry; scientific and technological community; and farmers. Many included in these nine major groups, however, have reportedly been excluded in large part from the formal negotiating process of the Rio+20 zero draft.

In an open letter dated 25 April 2012 to the Secretary-General for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, Co-Chairs of the Bureau for Rio+20, and member states of the United Nations, several civil society organizations and social movements criticize the exclusion of major groups in the negotiation process. Unlike in the Preparatory Committee meetings and the

intercessional meetings, major groups and other stakeholders have not been allowed to present revisions or make statements on the floor. According to the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, which has compiled a text recording all the revisions suggested by major groups, their revisions to the zero draft have, so far, not been included in the official negotiating text.<sup>2</sup>

It is the UNCSD's responsibility to strengthen the capacity of major groups to be able to exert some influence over the negotiation process; it is highly recommended that it act on this responsibility. At the same time, it should also be kept in mind that the greater part of civil society is not directly involved in the major groups structure: As part of the UNCSD process, the major groups' networks are invited by the CSD Bureau to form a facilitating group, called organizing partners, that coordinates preparations and assists the Secretariat in generating and guiding the engagement of stakeholders for each major group sector. Although up to five organizations per each major group's sector serve as organizing partners, they only reflect a small fraction of global civil society.

Three types of actors can be distinguished in the Rio process:

- governments and heads of state;
- non-governmental organizations of the UN system divided into nine socio-professional groups within an informal Stakeholder Forum (Major Groups);
- citizens and civil society organizations, that is, social movements, networks, and thematic or socio-professional organizations, organized at the People's Summit.<sup>3</sup>

There is widespread agreement, that all groups and actors should be involved in the Rio+20 process: In order to strengthen civil society involvement, the Brazilian government will host the »Dialogue on Sustainable Development« from 16–19 June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro. This four-day event, organized by the Brazilian government consists of expert panels with the participation of civil society on the following ten topics:

- Food and nutritional security;
- Sustainable development and the eradication of poverty;
- Sustainable development as the answer to economic and financial crises;
- The economics of sustainable development, including patterns of production and consumption;
- Sustainable cities;
- Unemployment, decent work, and migrations;
- Sustainable energy for all and innovation;
- Water;
- Oceans;<sup>4</sup>
- Forests.

Representatives from the dialogue are to deliver outcomes from the gathering to the high-level roundtables at Rio+20. The Civil Society Facilitating Committee at Rio+20,<sup>5</sup> which is charged with organizing the People's Summit for Social and Environmental Justice, announced on 4 May 2012, however, that it would not participate in the preparatory events organized by the Brazilian government.<sup>6</sup> Even though the committee values dialogue between governments and civil society, and has long fought for such platforms, it remains critical of the Brazilian governments' top-down approach. It notes that the Brazilian government chose the dialogue topics, participants, and facilitators. It is also concerned that the government's proposed method of selecting three recommendations per topic to present at the conference will lead to the selection of positions on which civil society will not have had any impact.

### 3. Civil Society Preparations for Rio+20

Instead, a number of self-organized events and processes on behalf of civil society will be held in preparation for the Rio+20 conference. In addition to the events mentioned below, it should be noted that international civil society and social movements have been involved in global processes and actions since the first Rio conference in 1992. It is impossible to name them all. Other re-

2. Open letter to the secretary-general for UNCSD, co-chairs of the Bureau for Rio+20, and member states of the United Nations, 25 April 2012: <http://cupuladospovos.org.br/en/2012/04/rights-at-risk-at-the-united-nations> (accessed 20 May 2012).

3. See <http://rio20.net/en/process> (accessed 21 May 2012).

4. See <http://rio20.net/en/events/four-days-of-dialogue-on-sustainable-development-2> (accessed 20 May 2012).

5. The International Coordination Group of the Civil Society Facilitating Committee at Rio+20 for the People's Summit consists of 35 networks, social movements, and organizations from 13 different countries.

6. See <http://cupuladospovos.org.br/en/2012/05/the-summit-will-not-participate-in-rio20-preparatory-event-organized-by-the-brazilian-government> (accessed 20 May 2012).

cent events have included, for example, the World Conferences of Peoples on Climate Change in Cochabamba, Bolivia, held April 2010 and October 2011.

Thematic Social Forum: Capitalist Crisis, Social and Environmental Justice, Porto Alegre, Brazil, 24–29 January 2012

The Thematic Social Forum gathered civil society activists from all over the world to discuss challenges for the Rio+20 conference.<sup>7</sup> Besides the core topics of Green Economy, distributive justice and equity, and sustainable agriculture, the first draft of the future Rio declaration, the zero draft, was also discussed. In the opinion of many of the civil society actors in attendance, the draft was a big disappointment, as questions of equity, sustainable consumption, and the limits of growth were ignored. Moreover, they felt that the text, with the help of the prevailing Green Economy approach, belittles the dramatic consequences of prevalent neoliberal thinking. They asked, therefore, for recognition of more social and ecological justice and expect the international community of states to finally address such core issues as justice, reduction of poverty, food security, and climate.

People's Summit (Cupula dos Povos), Rio de Janeiro, 15–22 June 2012

The People's Summit for Social and Environmental Justice during Rio+20, organized by global civil society, is an event held alongside the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development.<sup>8</sup> In the view of international civil society, the planned agenda for Rio+20 is unsatisfactory for dealing with the crisis of the planet caused by the models of capitalist production and consumption. Therefore, the people's summit will gather civil society organizations and social movements worldwide to discuss and formulate alternative solutions for the world's problems. In addition to workshops and self-organized discussion groups, the People's Permanent Assembly, the main political forum of the summit, will develop a political agenda created by the people.

7. See <http://www.fstematico2012.org.br> (accessed 20 May 2012).

8. See <http://cupuladospovos.org.br> (accessed 20 May 2012).

The summit's overall stated aims are as follows:

- Expose and report the structural causes of the crisis and the false solutions that their own creators want to impose in order to refound capitalism. We ought to expose and denounce them;
- Promote the real solutions coming from the people to eradicate the social, economic and environmental injustice. We ought to render visible our proposals and gain support for them;
- Render visible the struggles of our communities against the advance of capital on our lives; on the cities, on the countryside, on the seaside, wherever;
- Move forward on the articulation of those struggles turns out essential [sic] so as to progress on the construction of people's power. Internationalize the struggle for shifting the system, articulating, coordinating the local struggles.<sup>9</sup>

Second Trade Union Assembly on Labour and Environment, Rio de Janeiro, 11–13 June 2012

This event – jointly organized by Sustainlabour, the International Labour Foundation for Sustainable Development, and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) seeks to provide a space for trade unions to debate their priorities and future commitments and to develop resolutions on such key issues as climate change, chemicals management, collective bargaining, and sustainable development.<sup>10</sup>

The assembly's aims are as follows:

- Continue building environmental internationalism;
- Renew trade union commitments on sustainable development;
- Promote alliances with other civil society actors and social movements;
- Put trade unions' demands on the table and in the streets: Rio+20 and beyond.<sup>11</sup>

9. See <http://cupuladospovos.org.br/en/2012/04/lets-get-together-on-june-5th-and-20th> (accessed 20 May 2012).

10. See <http://assemblyrio20.sustainlabour.org/index.php?lang=EN> (accessed 20 May 2012).

11. See <http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&nr=948&type=230&menu=38> (accessed 20 May 2012).

### FES Regional Rio+20 Preparatory Conferences

As discussed above, the official UN process with regard to sustainable development lacks a sufficient degree of civil society involvement. Against this backdrop, FES hosted five regional preparatory conferences in order to formulate regional positions on the key topics of Rio+20 with the involvement of civil society actors, trade unions, and progressive parties. The conferences took place during March and April 2012 in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America and the Middle East/North Africa:

- **Africa:** 29–30 March 2012, Nairobi, Kenya – participants from Botswana, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe as well as from ITUC Africa, UNEP, United Nations Commission for Africa, and Southern African Development Community (SARDC).
- **Asia:** 2–3 April 2012, New Delhi, India – participants from Bangladesh, China, Germany, India, Indonesia, Korea, Malaysia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and Vietnam.
- **Europe:** 12 April 2012, Brussels, Belgium – participants from Germany, the European Commission, the European Parliament, European non-governmental organizations, as well as permanent representations to the European Union.
- **Latin America:** 26–27 March 2012, Quito, Ecuador – with participants from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay.
- **Middle East/North Africa:** 3–4 April, Tunis, Tunisia – participants from Bahrain, Egypt, Lebanon, Spain, Sudan, and Tunisia.

In total, participants from 47 countries from non-governmental organizations, trade unions, progressive parties, and regional organizations took part in the conferences.

The objectives of the series of regional conferences were as follows:

- to increase awareness for the relevance of sustainable development and the Rio process in different regions and countries;
- to establish and strengthen a dialogue within civil society as well as between civil society and policy making at the regional level;
- to discuss regional challenges and concerns with regard to sustainable development and in building green economies;
- to strengthen the role of civil society actors in the Rio process and to formulate demands on behalf of civil society at the regional level;
- to give civil society actors a voice in the Rio process.

In each regional conference, participants discussed in workshops and working groups the challenges their region faces with regard to the 2012 Rio conference's two main topics and formulated, where possible, joint civil society positions and demands for the international negotiators. A unique feature of the FES series was the joint dialogue and cooperation between representatives from non-governmental organizations and trade unions, instead of each participating in a separate, parallel preparatory process, as is often the case. Further, the participation of UN representatives – in Kenya the conference was organized in cooperation with UNEP – secured the link to UN processes.

This paper summarizes recommendations and demands, on behalf of civil society actors, for the upcoming conference as a result of the regional preparatory conferences. In a joint final event on 18 June 2012 at the People's Summit in Rio de Janeiro, the regional positions will be discussed and presented to a broader range of civil society actors and officials. Although it is understood that the policy papers only stand for a fraction of civil society and are not representative of entire countries or regions, they make a contribution to strengthening civil society in the process and to having its voices heard.





# Policy Paper Africa

*Peter Oesterdiekhoff*

## 1. Background

The RIO+20 preparatory process continues to move forward, with delegates holding back-to-back meetings in different parts of the world to negotiate the outcome document for June's conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD). Observers have noted, however, that there has been little convergence of negotiating positions so far, despite the UN summit drawing even nearer. The June 2012 Conference marks twenty years since the landmark 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED).

In recognition of the crucial role of global solutions to the unfolding environmental crisis, the Rio+20 preparatory process in Africa was launched in early 2011. Main drivers are United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), the African Union (AU), New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and civil society organisations. The Africa Regional Preparatory Conference for UNCSD, held in Addis Ababa in October 2011, launched the »Africa Consensus Statement to Rio+20«, presenting the African governments' positions on the summit. NGOs, however, have only come up with brief statements. A comprehensive position on the upcoming issues of the Rio+20 Conference, reflecting both the views of non-state actors and the particular situation in Africa, is still missing.

Therefore, a preparatory conference of civil society and trade unions in Africa was held March 29–30, 2012 in Nairobi, Kenya. It was jointly organised by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation Kenya and UNEP. The meeting was attended by about forty participants from civil society organisations and trade unions from around Africa, and focused on the two key Rio+20 issues – Green Economy and institutional framework for sustainable development. It provided civil society and trade union actors the opportunity to present their ideas on sustainability, as well as their specific positions on key topics of Rio+20, and discuss these with representatives from research and policy-making.

\* Peter Oesterdiekhoff is Country Director of the FES office in Nairobi, Kenya.

## 2. Key Positions and Arguments

In addition to input and presentations at the plenary, the main tasks were allocated to working groups that reviewed arguments and positions on critical aspects of the concept of Green Economy and the institutional framework for sustainable development. The major issues raised by the working groups are as follows:

### On the Concept of Green Economy

Civil society organisations and trade unions noted there is a lot of resistance to the Green Economy concept from G77 but little resistance from African countries within G77, which are generally supporting it. However, it was proposed that UNEP and relevant organisations assess in a more detailed and contextualised manner the advantages and risks associated with the transition to the Green Economy, in order to determine its contributions to poverty eradication, loss of competitiveness in selected sectors, threat of green protectionism, and trade-distorting green subsidies. Furthermore, a cost-benefit analysis in Africa is imperative before countries move towards Green Economy. Such an approach should take into account country-specific comparative advantages and engage the Green Economy concept on a more factual basis. Against this background, UNEP's plans to carry out country-specific analyses to assess the viability of Green Economy projects are welcome and should be expedited.

Concerning the »Africa Consensus Statement to Rio+20«, civil society organisations and trade unions are to find better ways of giving their input and making contributions in future processes, though the document has already been adopted in order to formulate their concerns on specific issues. There are fears in Africa that the Green Economy concept is technologically dominated and promotes the commercial interests of developed countries and multinational companies, to the detriment of the other pillars of sustainability – especially the social dimension. The concerns that the Green Economy might not achieve social equity, but

rather promote economic growth and business-as-usual should be taken seriously. Another important aspect is adequate technology and financial support for developing countries to build Green Economies: adequate technology transfer and investments that spur growth in African countries and impart skills to help build human capital should be ensured. Furthermore, small enterprises in Africa have to be supported in adapting to the Green Economy, since many technologies are quite expensive. Private sector investors should invest in affordable Green Economy projects for the informal economy. This is also a prerequisite for social equity, considering the huge and growing share of the informal sector and small businesses in African economies. It is foreseeable that in the transition to Green Economy, there will be job creation and job losses, and African governments must put in place the right policies and laws to mitigate any negative effects anticipated.

Moreover, guarantees are required, which ensure that multinational companies and international bodies do not misuse the Green Economy for investment gains. This calls for the establishment of good governance structures during the transition to Green Economy and later on. Corporate social responsibility would be one of the tools in the transition to the Green Economy. Not least, financial institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and International Finance Corporation need to be involved for the transition to be successful.

#### On the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development

Civil society organisations and trade unions in Africa agreed that strengthening UNEP is a key element in reforming the institutional framework for sustainable development. First of all, UNEP should become a more specialised organ with greater financial leverage. As a next step, it was proposed that UNEP could adopt the World Trade Organisation (WTO) structure of governance, though without legal obligations to its members, which uses dispute settlement mechanisms. With such an adjustment, UNEP would be in a better position to protect public goods. Furthermore, civil society organisations and trade unions should be incorporated in the implementation of various UNEP programmes for the purpose of inclusiveness and ownership. With regard to the implementation of Green Economy approaches, there are

institutional and good governance requirements as well: First, community partnerships and local governments should be engaged in the development of the Green Economy roadmap. Another key aspect is transparency: As the transformation towards Green Economy is bound to create losses and gains, accountability and good governance are requisite elements of the process. Therefore, good governance has to be embedded as a fourth pillar in Green Economy, linked to a bottom-up participatory approach.

### 3. Synthesis: Joint Regional Position

There are compelling reasons for an increased role of African governments in steering towards a Green Economy. A homogenous approach (one-size-fits-all) is, however, neither possible nor recommendable. In order to promote Green Economic development at the national level, a serious commitment by African states should be expressed by committing to a specified road map with clear and verifiable indicators. General plans and programmes lack credibility if they are not accompanied by such country-specific road maps. Therefore, civil society organisations and trade unions in Africa propose deconstructing the concept of Green Economy to ensure ownership by the people who understand the issues and their relevance in different sectors of the economy, and to redefine it in the context of African countries. From our perspective, it is also important to know the true costs of a transition from the current status quo to a Green Economy. Furthermore, given that there will be lack of resources and capacities – specifically concerning human capital and technology – concepts need to be developed to clarify how such capacities will be sourced. Resorting to external finance can't be the solution, as it will only increase debt and jeopardise financial sustainability.

In any case, Green Economy policies need to be mainstreamed into national and regional development strategies. It is necessary to establish how Green Economy addresses present challenges in Africa – particularly concerning water, energy, food security, and employment – in the light of the development stages of different countries. From our perspective, developed countries' commitment to Green Economy and other sustainable development initiatives is a concern for Africa. Hence, the outcome of Rio+20 must have binding character. Africa should insist on a rules-based, open,

non-discriminatory, and equitable trading system, and reinvigorate multilateral trade negotiations to achieve a development-orientated outcome of the Doha Round in support of the transition to a Green Economy. Concerning the »Africa Consensus Statement« and the Rio+20 »Zero Draft«, greater emphasis is required on agriculture, natural resources, and the informal sector. Both the »Statement« and the »Draft« need to be more specific and fill these gaps.

In addition to recommendations directed towards the two Rio topics »Green Economy« and »Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development«, civil society organisations and trade unions in Africa agree that social justice and equity should be central to the Green Economy debate. It is fundamental, that the eradication of poverty is the overall goal of the Green Economy in Africa. Therefore, a just transition to the Green Economy is of major importance. In order to achieve this, more social dialogue is needed in sectors where Green Economy investments are targeted. Furthermore, the social protection of workers in their livelihoods, (re-) training of workers, health, and good living conditions are indispensable parts of the transition. Governments in Africa have a critical role to play in ensuring the smooth transition to the Green Economy. They should, for instance, invest in soil fertility to improve small-scale farmers' production and improve their income levels. In addition, governments must guard against land grab and should not displace people from their own natural resources (like land) without creating a viable alternative, e.g. farm space.

Not least, we agree that Green Economy has to respect human rights and to uphold the Rio 1992 principles, such as the polluter pays principle, precautionary principle, and the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.

#### 4. Demands for International Negotiators<sup>1</sup>

»We, African Civil Society Organisations and Trade Unions represented at Rio+20 Preparatory Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya from 29–30 March 2012 to discuss Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication in Africa;

Re-affirm the African Union decision to strengthen the International Framework for Sustainable Development of the United Nations including, but not limited to, the strengthening of UNEP;

Call on the Rio+20 Conference to:

1. Support a people-centred Green Economy that respects human rights and upholds the Rio 1992 principles (polluter pays, precautionary, and common but differentiated responsibility) promoting the well-being of citizens based on equitable development, fairness, justice, safety and security for the common good, and benefits for all living beings on this planet, and that recognises the intrinsic value of ecological systems that support present and future generations.
2. Embed »Good Governance« as a fourth pillar in sustainable development linked to a Green Economy approach through stronger participatory decision-making processes and putting Principle 10 of the Rio Declaration into practice.
3. Focus on a people-centred Green Economy that should have a level playing field and not entrench further global disparities through economic policies based on trade liberalisation, privatisation, and financial deregulation promoted by the international financing and trade institutions.
4. Demand strong commitment to the implementation of a Green Economy by the international community, including African countries, with a clear road map towards a just and fair transition.
5. Determine a more reliable, easily accessible, equitable and transparent system that facilitates technology sharing based on Principle 9 of the Rio Declaration. Otherwise, restrictions imposed by the intellectual property rights regime are a major hurdle for appropriate technology transfer.
6. Ensure that the transition to a people-centred Green Economy must prioritise public interest and the state's obligation to ensure that the developmental needs of its citizens, particularly the poor and vulnerable, are met through reclaiming public goods and services based on the rights of people and nature.«

1. Resolution adopted at the conference.



# Policy Paper Asia

*Malancho Chakrabarty*

## 1. Background

Sustainable development has been the overarching goal of the international community since the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio in 1992. Two decades on, however, the world is far from realising the vision of Rio. Problems that include a lack of clean energy resources, development, and environmental degradation have become more severe and have been compounded in recent years by the global economic crisis. In addition, there are grave concerns such as: climate change; food and energy security for the increasing global population; high levels of poverty and deprivation in developing countries; and rising global inequalities, particularly in Asia. Therefore, the upcoming UNCSD –the Rio+20 Summit – is an opportunity for world leaders to address the economic, social, and environmental crises gripping the world today.

The Rio+20 conference will focus on the following two themes:

- (a) A Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication;
- (b) An institutional framework for sustainable development.

The objective of this paper is to present the perspective of Asian civil society actors, trade unions, parliamentarians, and progressive academics on key issues being addressed at Rio+20. This paper is an outcome of the »Rio+20 Preparatory Conference« hosted by Germany's Friedrich Ebert Foundation in New Delhi from 2–3 April 2012. More than forty delegates from twelve Asian countries and Germany assembled in Delhi for the two-day event, and shared their respective ideas on sustainable development and expectations regarding the Rio+20 Summit. The first section of the paper presents an analytical overview of the themes discussed at the conference, the second section discusses possibilities for

a joint regional position. The final section lists the demands from Asian civil society actors, who were present in Delhi for the conference.

## 2. Key Positions and Arguments

### On the Concept of Green Economy

Although the concept of a »Green Economy« has moved into the mainstream of policy discourse, as yet it has no consensual definition. The concept of Green Economy amalgamates several existing concepts such as durable economic activity, reduced environmental impact, sustained growth in high-quality jobs, and reduced poverty. However, many civil society groups – particularly trade unions – and policy makers express concerns about this theme. The following paragraphs outline some of the key areas of concern for the delegates assembled for the Rio+20 Preparatory Conference Asia regarding the concept of Green Economy.

Firstly, the environmental protection agenda appears to be dominant in the Green Economy concept, and as a result, it currently fails to adequately account for the development and equity dimensions of sustainable development. Secondly, the call for universally applicable sustainable development goals in the zero draft of the Rio+20 outcome document ignores the fact that countries differ in terms of size, structure, and level of development. A »one size fits all« approach in which the quantitative targets for least developed countries would be the same as that for developed countries is against the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. Moreover, ignoring the priorities and conditions of developing countries is likely to lead to a failure on both the developmental and environmental fronts. Poverty eradication continues to be the overriding goal for Asian countries, because a large section of the population in most Asian countries still lacks the basic requirements for a decent standard of living in terms of nutrition, access to education, and basic health, as well as to other public services such as water supply and sewerage – particularly in South Asia. Thus

\* Malancho Chakrabarty is Research Associate at the Green Growth and Development Division at The Energy and Resources Institute (TERI) in New Delhi, India.

from an Asian perspective, development needs and priorities of economic growth in developing countries plus social development goals including poverty eradication, job creation, health, and education should be at the core of the Green Economy concept. Thirdly, developing countries fear that the Green Economy approach might be inappropriately used by industrialized countries for trade protectionist measures and to promote the access of their goods and services into markets of developing countries.

Although the current Green Economy concept promises the creation of adequate job opportunities, civil society actors fear that developing countries in Asia and beyond may face an increase in unemployment, at least in the short run, because of an increase in exports of green technologies and environmental goods from developed countries. Another potential problem for developing countries is the adoption of environmental standards for export products. Developing countries that are unable to meet the standards face the threat of losing their exports. Moreover, the introduction of a Green Economy in Asian developing countries may further restrain socio-economic development and perpetuate poverty of populations dependent on natural resources, by using market-based instruments for efficient use of natural resources, such as water. Implementing an instrument like payment for ecosystem services is extremely difficult in developing countries like India, where a large part of the forest population lives in abject poverty. The poor and vulnerable are the most dependent on ecosystem services; they cannot be expected to pay for basic needs like water. Lastly, inadequate attention has been placed on issues related to women's empowerment, although women perform a vital role in environmental management and social development. The following section discusses some of the major recommendations for Green Economy to become truly sustainable.

#### On the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development

A reform of the institutions currently involved in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda in the United Nations system – particularly UNEP and the Commission on Sustainable Development – is critical for integrating the three dimensions of sustainable

development, improve effectiveness in implementation, bring about further co-ordination of policy, and address current deficiencies. Since the establishment of UNEP in 1972, the reach of sustainable development governance has expanded greatly. Although the institutional framework has witnessed a dramatic growth in the number of institutions and agreements, there are several areas of concern regarding the implementation of sustainable development. The inadequate implementation can be attributed to factors that include a lack of financial resources, lack of political will, and lack of transparency in the functioning of institutions. Among these, a lack of financial resources is the major impediment faced by UNEP. The Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was created in 1992 to ensure effective follow-up mechanisms to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development. Although the Commission on Sustainable Development is the principle policy-making institution, it failed to demonstrate results.

### 3. Synthesis: Joint Regional Position

#### On the Concept of Green Economy

A balance needs to be struck between the three pillars of sustainable development. Neglecting any one pillar – particularly the social dimension – would defeat the purpose of attaining sustainability. Hence, efforts should be made so that all the pillars reinforce each other. Therefore, equity, poverty eradication, and balance between the three pillars of development should be the benchmark of Asia's approach to Green Economy. The foremost concern of developing countries in Asia is the lack of access to basic needs – such as water, sanitation, education, healthcare, and livelihood security – which are extremely important for a decent quality of life. Although some Asian countries, such as India, have experienced high rates of economic growth, these rates did not lead to a significant eradication of poverty and improvement in the living standards of the majority of citizens. It has been difficult for these countries to perform well on sustainable development indicators, with increasing inequalities and more people joining the informal sector. Accordingly, the Green Economy approach should contribute to meeting the key goals of Asian countries – in particular, poverty eradication, public health, universal access to modern energy services, education, water, and sanitation.

As stated above, one of the major weaknesses of the Green Economy approach has been inadequate attention to the social pillar of development. While the zero draft of the Rio+20 outcome document states that the transition to a Green Economy will create significant job opportunities, it is important to recognize that workers must have the requisite skills to participate in and benefit from such an economic transition. For instance, a higher share of renewable energy in the total energy mix in Asian countries will lead to a rise in imports of the necessary technology in the short run, and large-scale unemployment of workers previously employed in coal-based power plants. Trade union representatives therefore point out that it is important to have a clear roadmap for re-skilling workers, particularly youth. Moreover, it is also important to protect the livelihoods of vulnerable populations, such as forest dwellers whose livelihoods and consumption might be adversely affected by the green transition. Thus, trade unions will have to play an active role in the provision of adequate safety nets for the poor and vulnerable as well as people employed in the informal sector who have no labour rights and have very little influence on national and international policies.

Furthermore, the empowerment of women and gender equality must be treated as a core development challenge rather than as a cross-cutting issue. In most of the developing countries of Asia, women share an unequal burden of household work and do not have equal access to education and health facilities. The development agenda post Rio+20 must take into account women's voices and aspirations, because gender equality and women's empowerment are central to the achievement of sustainable development.

#### On the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development

An institutional framework for sustainable development, nationally and globally, can be made more supportive by ensuring a more active participation from civil society. While the Commission on Sustainable Development process is still recognized as the most interactive and inclusive process within the United Nations system – allowing for active civil society engagement – the processes still need to be strengthened substantially to benefit at the local levels, especially with regard to groups including farmers and women from developing countries. At pre-

sent, civil society largely plays the role of the observer at international conferences. Even though the system has become more open to NGOs and other groups, such organizations from developing countries are not able to effectively engage with the system due to resource constraints. It is important that the participation of civil society becomes more structured and organized.

Therefore, we call for the creation of a chamber in the Sustainable Development Council so that civil society – including trade unions – can play a more active role. The chamber for civil society should perform two important functions. Firstly, it should ensure that civil society acts as a system of checks and balances and ensures that governments meet their commitments. Secondly, the permanent chamber should also raise resources to fund civil society organizations, particularly in developing countries.

#### 4. Demands for International Negotiators

- There should be a balance between the three pillars of sustainable development. At the moment, the environmental pillar is dominant, while the social dimension is neglected.
- Poverty eradication and access to basic services such as modern energy services, adequate nutrition, water, etc. should be at the core of the Green Economy concept.
- In regard to green jobs, social equity and protection, especially for women and workers in the informal sector, must be prioritized.
- There should be a clear roadmap for providing workers with the requisite skills to participate in and benefit from the transition to a Green Economy. In this regard, trade unions have to be more comprehensively integrated into the Rio+20 process. Moreover, it is also important to protect the livelihoods of vulnerable populations, such as forest dwellers, who might be adversely affected by the green transition.
- A chamber for civil society should be created in the Sustainable Development Council so that civil society can play a more active role. The permanent chamber for civil society should also directly fund civil society organizations from developing countries to ensure broad-based participation.





# Policy Paper Europe

*Sidonie Wetzig*

## 1. Background

In the context of a series of conferences organised by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) in preparation for the Rio+20 summit – notably in Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and the MENA-region – the EU office of the FES organised an experts' roundtable that focused on Green Economy. This roundtable gathered representatives from European institutions (European Commission, European Parliament, European Council), the German Parliament, civil society organisations, trade unions, and business associations, to discuss the European Union's concept of Green Economy in view of the upcoming summit. Globally, the concept of Green Economy is perceived to be dominated by industrialised countries; it is, however, also controversial within the EU. This paper summarises aspects that were discussed relevant to EU policy and its co-operation with partner countries.

The European Commission identifies Green Economy – which ensures resource efficiency, as well as protection of the environment and biodiversity – as the only way out of the economic crisis. It is regarded as a means to secure growth and development, improve personal well-being, provide decent jobs, reduce inequality, tackle poverty, and preserve natural capital. It is the EU's path to increased competitiveness and sustainability, characterised by circular and low-carbon growth.

The EU has set itself the objective of an 80–95 per cent reduction of greenhouse gases by 2050, in the attempt to keep global warming below 2°C, perceiving this to be in line with its global responsibility as an industrialised economy. In the hope of setting a precedent to other countries through this example, it advocates for a transition of the global economy into a Green Economy. The EU considers an inclusive Green Economy the vehicle for achieving long-term sustainable development – which will ensure both the global creation of jobs and the eradication of poverty whilst safeguarding the natural resources economies depend on – even if it cannot provide a »one size fits all« solution.

\* Sidonie Wetzig works for the EU office of the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung in Brussels and is in charge of the working line »The EU and global issues« which includes amongst others climate and energy policy.

The EU is aiming for concrete and ambitious proposals as the outcome of the Rio+20 summit. The European Commission has singled out key areas that should be tackled on the international level – sustainable energy, water, sustainable land management and ecosystems, oceans, and resource efficiency – in order to demonstrate to its global partners the kind of targets it would like to see agreed upon; and is optimistic about injecting political momentum into the Rio+20 preparatory process.

## 2. Key Positions and Arguments

European trade unions and civil society organisations criticise Green Economy as being a panacea. There is considerable concern that focus on Green Economy would disregard the social dimensions of the transition process and would not guarantee global equity. Moreover, the concept of decent work and employment must also be respected for green jobs. Trade unions want to know what is to be expected from the transition with regard to skills, as well as its social effects. This must be tackled in co-operation with partner countries to avoid the shifting of polluting production processes from industrialised countries to developing and emerging countries. Connecting the outcome of Rio+20 to a rights-based approach – acknowledging the right to food and livelihood – would strengthen the social dimension in this context.

Green Economy is also criticised regarding scope. Are the proposed measures of the transition into Green Economy enough to confront the challenges of climate change and resource scarcity? If the root causes of unsustainable consumption and production patterns that prevailed in the past are to be addressed, the current growth-based business model needs to be improved and a thorough reform of the global economic and financial system needs to be implemented.

Discussants were also sceptical regarding the potential success of the EU in international negotiations. The focus on five areas identified by the EU – sustainable

energy, water, sustainable land management and ecosystems, oceans, and resource efficiency – appeared to some to be too limited for an effective negotiation strategy. Concentrating on only a few areas will inevitably exclude other aspects. The lack of the gender dimension, for instance, was notably deplored. The EU also appears to be challenged by other obstacles: for example, the effective implementation of its own strategy at the European level. Discussants were reminded of the Europe 2020 strategy, which outlined ambitious approaches to strengthen the sustainability of the European economy, but which sees its effectiveness diminished by austerity programmes concerted by member states.

### 3. Synthesis: Joint Regional Position

The prevailing consensus of the discussion was the necessity to act upon the economic and environmental challenges and the hope to find a substantial agreement at the Rio+20 summit. *Vis-à-vis* scarcity of resources, it was commonly acknowledged that consumption and production patterns in industrialised countries have to change. At the same time, emerging and developing countries have to be encouraged not to copy these old patterns. Looking back at the period since the first summit in Rio, speakers referred to a lost decade. Deregulation installed unsustainable financial and economic systems in key countries that paid no regard to environmental capital. The prevailing resistance to change, which grows even stronger in times of crisis, has to be overcome. It is the task of policy makers to communicate that this feeling of insecurity will persist if action is not taken in time. By anticipating risks on a crowded planet, proactive investment into necessary infrastructure can lead to desired results.

Speakers and participants at the European preparatory workshop were well aware of the reservations about the concept of Green Economy in other parts of the world. Any implementation has to respect these concerns: that it hinders development, leads to a new form of protectionism based on green standards, and clears the way for a new Washington Consensus. Therefore, strategies have to be found to bridge these worries and create an understanding between developing, emerging, and industrialised countries. This co-operation is necessary to avoid trade-offs between regions and sectors of interest.

The nexus between ecological, economical, and social sustainability was also widely acknowledged. If the economy is not ecologically sustainable, it will inevitably impact on social issues and society. Energy consumption is not only a question of climate change but also of rising costs, and therefore contains a social aspect. A double social challenge is inherent in the question of economic transformation: the status quo cannot be prolonged and will ultimately lead to social unrest, as would transformation from one day to the next.

### 4. Demands for International Negotiators

Compared to the preparations for the 1992 summit, its successor currently lacks enthusiasm and engagement. This applies both to public awareness and to some national governments. One specific demand for international negotiators is to agree on an inclusive outcome that can translate the global legislator dialogue into local agendas helping to identify different engagements of opportunities. The outcome of the summit would ideally pave the way for a continued process. International negotiators should identify mid- and long-term benefits and re-define targets of Green Economy. A policy framework could secure concrete results by agreeing on goals and target time frames. Harmonisation with other policy areas – such as trade and financial policies – should be an overarching objective. The conclusions should also apply a positive narrative and present opportunities that lie in the transformation of economies. This is not only to achieve the general public's support, but also to stimulate political backing in an unfavourable political atmosphere.

# Policy Paper Latin America

*Claudia Detsch*

## 1. Background

On 26 and 27 March, more than 30 delegates from the trade union sector, non-governmental organisations and think tanks as well as representatives from local and national parliaments discussed their expectations and positions regarding the upcoming Rio+20 Summit. For the regional preparatory conference in Latin America, the concept of Green Economy as one of the two central themes of the Rio conference was selected. The Green Economy is more controversial in Latin America than in other regions; particularly left-wing governments, but also a vast majority of civil society and the trade unions see the concept developed by the UNEP as strongly influenced by industrial countries and not very helpful or even potentially dangerous for the interests of the Left in Latin America. Already in preparation for Rio+20, progressive Latin American forces are outlining a strong opposition to the concept. In the framework of the UN Conference, this has to undergo a stronger critical assessment than before, in order for the concept of the »Green Economy« to further develop constructively. The doubts about this are related to specific, individual economic sectors, while other points of the concept are interpreted as helpful. The sub-themes perceived as critical were discussed over the course of the conference in plenary sessions and working groups (specifically, this involved the topics energy, including biofuels, agriculture, commerce, and mining). The goal of the preparatory conference in Latin America was to summarise the current state of the discussion from the official regional preparatory conference, to discuss contentious points as well as to assess the current mood of participants to Green Economy. The second central theme of the Rio Conference – the institutional framework for sustainable development – was set aside in favour of the discussion of pros and cons of the Green Economy, since it has not aroused the same degree of attention and controversy in the region.

## 2. Key Positions and Arguments

Latin American civil society is relatively pessimistic about the likely results of the Rio+20 Conference: instead of binding agreements, what is largely expected is a show event with only stated intentions that are non-binding. The main conflict concerns the assessment of the potential of Green Economy: for a minority, the concept represents a useful tool to encourage sustainable development. However, proponents of the concept also urge a stronger social orientation and the inclusion of actors hardly considered thus far, such as women and young people. In the majority, however, are the critical voices, which see a contradiction between sustainable development and Green Economy. They demand a return to the postulate of sustainable development and even see the concept of the Green Economy as a trap by industrial countries and transnational corporations. The belief is widespread that the danger of a misuse of the concept of Green Economy is large and this could serve as a distraction in order to avoid having a global discussion about the actual causes of current diverse crises. The emergence of »Green Protectionism« in the form of eco-labels, patents, or other intellectual property rights for green technology and other trade barriers by industrial countries is feared as a specific danger. These fears are fuelled further by the fact that so little clarity about the content and aims of the Green Economy concept has been achieved. Another criticism is that an ecological transformation of the economic system does not enable a fundamental structural change, and thus not the necessary system change and replacement of the capitalist system. The latter is not possible with the concept of the Green Economy, because it follows the logic of consumption and capitalistic accumulation – instead however, an end to the mercantilisation of the environment and genetic resources is needed. Although there is agreement that Green Economy is an inadequate concept, there are very different positions on how the alternative concept of sustainable development should be designed in practice. Both proponents and opponents of the Green Economy vaguely interpret the notion of sustainable development. It was also noted that the different Union Member Associations,

\* Claudia Detsch is Country Director of the FES office in Quito, Ecuador and head of the regional project on energy and climate policy.

many of them part of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA), are not profoundly familiar with TUCA's official position.

The progressive governments of the region have to be reproached because in practice they have not really altered the predominant economic model based on intensive resource extractivism as well as agro-industrial food production – but often have even intensified it. Moreover, dialogue with trade unions and civil society is not sought in all of the left-ruled countries.

### 3. Synthesis: Joint Regional Position

According to the participants, it would be important to voice the stated criticisms in a collective regional position – in fact, however, there are significant differences of opinion both between the groups of actors as well as between the different countries of the region. Nevertheless, there is broad agreement to the effect that the debate has to be broken down from the level of the heads of state and governments to the societal level. Thus far, the concept of the Green Economy was conceived and distributed »from above«, which considerably damages its legitimacy. Its further development and concrete implementation has to be shifted to the national and local level – no matter whether one advocates a return to the postulate of the sustainable development from Rio 92 or rates the concept of Green Economy as useful and appropriate. From a Latin American perspective, the most sensitive economic topics for the region – energy, agriculture, food security, international trade, mining, water, and land distribution – are not given equal consideration in the concept of the Green Economy. Since all of these sectors are closely interlinked, it is also of paramount importance that they can only be considered and further developed in an integrated approach. Furthermore, just how these individual sectors in the region can be further developed in a socially just and environmentally sustainable overall concept also resists consensus in Latin American civil society. As for approaches and instruments, there is agreement to the effect that the existing system in many countries of subsidisation of fossil fuels has to be reformed in favour of renewable energies and increased energy efficiency. There is disagreement, however, on the use of nuclear energy as an alternative energy source, as well as on the topic of mining: in particular, representatives of civil society

emphasise that there can be no »Green Mining« – politicians, on the other hand, see the state's responsibility to create the necessary framework for responsible mining. There is widespread agreement that the issue of water is central to the entire region and has to receive greater attention in the negotiations. On the contrary, the issue of biofuels needs to be addressed with greater sensibility. The general notion is that there is not a socially accepted concept in the region, for the increasingly strained co-existence between the development of small scale-farming and agro-industry.

The majority of civil society in Latin America sees the industrial countries responsible for bearing the brunt: a comprehensive finance and technology transfer must be ensured and reorganisation of intellectual property rights carried out. In addition, the state is asked to take a stronger role than before and to ensure that the real economy reclaims precedence over the financial economy.

### 4. Demands for International Negotiators

As previously mentioned, the local level must be emphasised more strongly in the UN negotiations and the implementation of decisions taken must be shifted to the national and local levels more than before. Additionally, it must be assured that the agreed outcomes are legally binding, unlike previous conferences. An important basis for realistic agreements is also the formulation of new indicators to measure prosperity and development, which has to find an entry into the negotiations. Also, it is in the interest of countries of the South, that the forms of employment in the informal sector are considered when the discussion is on the restructuring of economic systems – the same applies to non-cash paid work such as housekeeping. If nothing else, hardly considered groups like women, youth, indigenous peoples and small farmers should be accorded more attention in the future, both in the framework of the negotiation rounds and in the concepts to be discussed.

# Policy Paper Middle East/North Africa

*Alessandra Bonessi and Mourad Turki*

## 1. Background

According to the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (UN-ESCWA), the MENA region faces severe challenges in implementing steps towards a sustainable transition of its societies and economies. As an area in transition, however, the countries of the MENA region are ideally situated to pave the way for sustainable development that is economically dynamic, socially equitable, inclusive, and environmentally responsible.

This policy paper is the outcome of the Rio+20 Preparatory Conference »Green Economy: Which perspectives for the MENA Region?« hosted by the German Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Tunisia on April 3–4, 2012. The aim of the conference was to present the positions and recommendations that have been developed by civil society organisations, trade unions, and progressive parties; and that will be presented at the Rio+20 summit in June.

The two-day event in Tunisia assembled nearly ninety delegates from NGOs, trade unions, universities, media, progressive political parties, and international institutions from nine North African and Middle Eastern countries – namely, Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Oman, Sudan, and Tunisia. Representatives from Kenya, Germany, and Spain were also in attendance.

On the first day of the conference, presentations focused on the key topics of the Rio+20 conference – i. e., »Green Economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication« and »An Institutional framework for sustainable development«. The discussions highlighted the need to agree on shared definitions and common understandings, as well as to identify the current challenges confronting the MENA region in

order to create pathways leading to real change. As a result, six core themes emerged: Green Economy; institutional framework for sustainable development; future generations; gender and participation by women; private sector and green entrepreneurship; and the role of media and social media. Based on these subjects, participants have been divided into six working groups tasked with prioritising and formulating the region's guidelines and recommendations. This policy paper is the result of the evaluation and processing of these recommendations, insights, and interventions.

## 2. Key Positions and Arguments

### On the Concept of Green Economy

The MENA region's civil society organisations believe that to strengthen the international community's commitment to Green Economy, UN partners should institute Green Economy targets and sustainable development goals, with reference to the Millennium Development Goals. Moreover, it is important that policy-makers integrate the global orientation to Green Economy into their countries' policy strategies. In the course of building Green Economy, governments have to make a firm commitment to results and transparency – therefore, universally agreed indicators and assessment methods for green businesses must be established.

Innovative financial alternatives should also be developed and increased financial allocations to promote Green Economy initiated. To this end – and for governments to prove their commitment to RIO+20 – a dedicated fund, »The Future We Want«, should be created at the national level.

Furthermore, the UN and international organisations are called on to assist countries of the MENA region in creating an enabling environment for Green Economy, by supporting banking, financial, and fiscal systems through dedicated funds, ethical banking, low-rate loans, venture capital, etc.

\* Alessandra Bonessi is Vice President of the NGO TAAMS, which focuses on community development. In addition, she works as a freelance consultant and trainer.

Mourad Turki is a sociologist and is currently working as a consultant and trainer with expertise in the fields of environment, energy, rural development and management of natural resources.

### On the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development

Civil society organisations of the MENA region also support the proposal included in the »Zero Draft«, which urges the strengthening of international governance on environmental issues within the context of the institutional framework for sustainable development, to allow the balanced integration of the three pillars – social, economic, environmental – of sustainable development.

The establishment of a specialised UN agency for the environment, with universal membership of its Governing Council, is strongly encouraged. The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should operate with a revised and strengthened mandate, enabled by adequate and reliable financial contributions and enhanced means of implementation.

### Future Generations

In the course of establishing a Green Economy, youth should be encouraged to participate in decision-making processes. For this purpose, dedicated bodies for youth should be conceived and implemented (youth parliaments, special committees, etc.). Furthermore, it is important to integrate assessment indicators to measure the impact of development policies and programs on future generations.

The MENA region's civil society organisations recognise the need for empowering youth and for establishing an international umbrella for youth environmental NGOs, in order to promote and enhance their regional cooperation and networking. Additionally, there is strong consensus for a UN High Commissioner for Future Generations at national and international levels.

### Women and Gender Participation

The development of Green Economy that is supported by women's and civil society organisations – through more inclusive institutional, legal, and administrative mechanisms – is essential, and governments should make funds and resources available for this purpose. It is important to protect access to decent work and social security for women working in the informal sector and

to assess equality and equity issues in order to establish more inclusive legal and financial frameworks. In addition, the role of women in value transmission across generations should be recognised, and thus the development of sensitisation programmes and participation tools to involve women at all levels in defining policies and strategies in cultural, educational, and economic areas should be encouraged.

### Private Sector and Green Entrepreneurship

A legislative framework and incentive mechanisms should be established to stimulate and bind the private sector to integrate sustainability issues in their business strategies. To this end, concrete instruments such as eco-taxes, eco-labels, green banking, and green smart subsidies should be implemented to facilitate the transition to a Green Economy.

The private sector should take the lead in creating green societies by engaging with social and environmental responsibility more effectively. Hence, civil society organisations highlight the need to help private companies introduce cleaner production management practices and technologies and employ renewable energy.

In addition, the private sector can make a meaningful contribution to infusing a green culture in young entrepreneurs by supporting educational institutions and business/industry promotion agencies. Accordingly, the private sector should introduce »quotas« of green jobs for youth and foster employability in Green Economy sectors.

Further, civil society organisations in the MENA region strongly support the establishment of deterrent mechanisms for polluters to reduce their GHG emissions, as well as industrial green zones that offer fiscal and financial advantages.

### Role of Mass and Social Media

From a regional perspective, media are decisive in popularising the culture of sustainable development and the principles of Green Economy. Thus, to enhance their role, an enabling environment for media has to be created. Fostering the right to information and building



an international consensus on the right to access information related to environmental issues will qualify the media both as a major partner in Green Economy and sustainable development, and as a catalyst for the relevant key actors (civil society organisations, educational systems, and governments).

The capacities of the media should be enriched through training and experience-sharing for journalists and reporters, through the establishment of an international information-sharing platform in the field of Green Economy, as well as through the strengthening of skills, competencies, and abilities of investigative journalism on environmental topics.

Private media should engage with the benefits of Green Economy and disseminate the ethical principles of human well-being. While calling private media to this undertaking, the MENA region's civil society organisations ask governments to support them by facilitating access to all information related to Green Economy.

It is recognised that social networks have become active agents in mainstreaming positive values among youth. That being so, they should be empowered and used as low-cost tools to disseminate green culture and green technologies.





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Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung | Global Policy and Development  
Hiroshimastr. 28 | 10785 Berlin | Germany

Responsible:  
Jochen Steinhilber, Head, Global Policy and Development

Phone: ++49-30-269-35-7408 | Fax: ++49-30-269-35-9246  
<http://www.fes.de/GPol/en>

To order publications:  
[Sandra.Richter@fes.de](mailto:Sandra.Richter@fes.de)

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