



THE PRESIDENT
OF THE
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

23 May 2011

Excellency,

A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication is one of the two themes of the upcoming United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, which will be held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in June 2012.

As a contribution to the preparatory process for this important Conference and to promote a better understanding of green economy, I am convening a one-day informal *Thematic Debate on Green Economy: A Pathway to Sustainable Development* on 2 June 2011. I attach for your reference the draft programme for this event. Updated information is available on the website of the President of the General Assembly.

Please accept, Excellency, the assurances of my highest consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Deiss'.

Joseph Deiss

All Permanent Representatives and
Permanent Observers to the United Nations
New York

INFORMAL THEMATIC DEBATE OF THE 65TH SESSION OF
THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON
GREEN ECONOMY: A PATHWAY TO SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Thursday, 2 June 2011
Conference Room 4, North Lawn Building, United Nations Headquarters

Background

Ever since the 1992 *United Nations Conference on Environment and Development* (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, “sustainable development” has been a guiding principle for development and cooperation activities around the world. A goal to be achieved, sustainable development is characterized by the simultaneous realization of economic development, social development and environmental protection.

Although the prevailing economic development model has led to improvements in human wellbeing for many, it has also in some instances generated uneven economic growth, social inequity and environmental damage. These shortcomings stem from a series of market and institutional failures embedded in the prevailing system. For instance, the cost of pollution is not sufficiently reflected in the price of goods; public goods such as freshwater and fisheries suffer from overexploitation; and people whose livelihoods depend on natural resources are often excluded from the decision-making processes that govern those resources.

A green economy seeks to correct the systemic market and institutional shortcomings of the prevailing development model and thereby make economies a more effective tool for achieving sustainable development. A green economy consists of a range of public policy approaches (e.g., expenditures, taxes, regulations, institutional reforms) and private sector actions that fix market and institutional failures. Which approaches and actions are most suitable will vary between nations, depending on their current stage of economic development, natural resource base, human and social capital and other conditions.

Where sustainable development is the destination, green economy offers a pathway.

“A green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication” is one of two major themes of the upcoming *United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development* (Rio +20) in June 2012. But questions still abound. What are the characteristics of green economy? What are the barriers to achieving green economy? Based on lessons learned from case examples, how can a country transition to a green economy? How can green economy serve as a pathway to sustainable development?

Objective and Expected Outcomes

The *Thematic Debate on Green Economy* will address these and related questions. The debate aims to strengthen the understanding of green economy and of what the international community, each Member State and local communities can do to transition to green economy. Through moderated panel discussions and interactive dialogue, delegates and other participants will be able to discuss the opportunities, challenges, and strategies for advancing a green economy.

The thematic debate will underscore the linkages between green economy, economic development, poverty eradication and environmental protection. It is envisioned that these discussions, which will be captured in the Summary of the President, will help promote a better understanding of green economy and positively contribute to relevant international processes, including the preparation for Rio+20.

Programme

Panel One: Opportunities and Challenges of Green Economy

Examples of green economy in practice exist throughout the world, demonstrating positive contributions to sustainable development. But at the same time, concerns have been raised that green economy could trigger trade protectionism and conditionalities on development aid. This panel will discuss the characteristics of green economy, its potential for achieving sustainable development and the remaining questions regarding green economy.

Panel Two: Transitioning toward Green Economy

Green economy is not a “one size fits all” pathway to sustainable development. A wide variety of green economy approaches exist for transitioning to it. This panel will discuss these approaches, including proven policies and actions that institutions at the local, national and international levels can take.

Time	Programme (NLB, Conference Room 4)
10:00 – 10:15am	<p>Opening Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the General Assembly • H.E. Mrs. Asha-Rose Migiro, UN Deputy Secretary-General
10:15am – 1:00pm	<p>Interactive Panel Debate 1: Opportunities and Challenges of Green Economy</p> <p>Moderator: (tbc)</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Trevor Manuel, Minister in the Presidency, National Planning Commission, South Africa • Ms. Suzana Kahn Ribeiro, Green Economy Sub-Secretary, State Environment Secretariat, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil • Mr. Harsha Singh, Deputy Director-General, World Trade Organization • Private sector
1:15 – 2:45pm	<p>A side-event organized by UNIDO and UNEP on the occasion of this thematic debate, and in observance of World Environment Day:</p> <p>“Green Economy: Ecosystem and Resource Efficiency with special focus on Forests and Forest Industries”.</p>
3:00 – 5:45pm	<p>Interactive Panel Debate 2: Transitioning toward Green Economy</p> <p>Moderator: Mr. James Leape, Director General, World Wide Fund for Nature</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Blaise Louembe, Minister for Habitat, Urban Ecology and Sustainable Development, Gabon • Mr. Du Ying, Vice Chairman, National Development and Reform Commission, People’s Republic of China • Mr. Søren Søndergaard Kjær, Deputy Permanent Secretary for Environment, Denmark • Mr. Kandeh K. Yumkella, Director-General, UN Industrial and Development Organization • Ms. Marianne Fay, Chief Economist, Sustainable Development Network, The World Bank
5:50 – 6:00pm	<p>Closing Remarks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mr. Sha Zukang, Secretary-General for Rio+20 • H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of the General Assembly