Green Economy, the UNCSD 2012, and the EEAC Annual Statement

Introductory remarks

to the EEAC annual conference 2011 in Wroclaw, Poland: Rio 20plus: The "Green Economy" Agenda in the context of Sustainable Development and Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development

Dr. Guenther Bachmann
German Council on Sustainable Development,
co-chair of the EEAC Working Group Sustainable Development

The Green Economy topic is a massive one.

It means nothing less than addressing, if you allow the metaphor from the digital world, the main frame and the dashboard and the set up of the global economy. It addresses

- the ecologic dimension because right now we are depleting the environment,
- the fiscal dimension because right now we burning money and social wealth for nothing, and
- the social dimension because we are wasting social energy of many people by not employing and paying them decently.

Thus, talking about green economy is talking about fundamental change in business models, in production and consumption, in the mindset of people. The agenda for a green economy is about commitment, action, responsability and accountability. It is about low carbon, resource productivity and justice, decent jobs, and participation. It is all about entrepreneurial practise, about roadmaps, about responsible decision taking, public procurement. Most certainly, it is about new thinking.

This is why the EEAC network felt it a good idea to put together the various work items that are being pursued within the network. In relation to the green economy we find a huge variety of different contents, approaches, and tools. We find ourselves very differently addressing the how and who. The variety is our strength. The result fits with the agenda of next years UN conference, but should have been covered anyway in one way or the other.

What is our message?

One, there is a case for a green economy, but it is only viable, tangible, credible, and effective when it forms part of the wider context of sustainable development.

Two, our statement encourages and urgently asks for more action, more engagement in the private sector and improved and enforced state activities. We also see a case for the civil society to get more involved.

Three, we ask for more clarity. Conflicts of interest have to be addressed properly. We have to address second thoughts and fears associated with the concept of green economy. Some are fearful that green economy is a trap. They feel trapped because the technology they are using today is less competitive than a green tech. We have to take this fear for serious, and provide help. But also, we have to say very cleary that we need big moves, ambitious action. We must play this properly and in fully accounting for implications and problems, be we can not afford to play it slowly and without taking risks.

Some are fearful that green economy might turn out as just another brick in the wall of protectionism and market distortion. Again, we have to take this fear for serious. And, yes, the green economy is about regulatory efforts creating market opportunities, about benefit sharing, new thinking and innovation in social responsibility.

The Rio conference in 2012, officially called the Rio+20 conference, is expected to produce a vision on green economy. The German Council for Sustainable Development refers to this conference as Rio20+. That makes it clear that our view is future bound. This conference must not hail the ashes. It should rather ignite the fire.

The green economy opens great chances and opportunities for new and decent jobs, for long term investments and approaches to put the people in the middle of the economy. To do so, we need continued rethinking and fostering. (Not only) for this purpose, the we ask the European Union to renew, refocus and foster its Sustainable Development Strategy. We invite the European Commission to make good use of our practise examples that you could be found as annex to the statement. I personally see it as a natural next step to conduct a broad Peer Review Process that aims at checking the green economy issues and policies. Peer Reviews are typically used as instruments for the mutual learning in policy fields that imply and maintain lots of innovative elements. The green economy topic is a topic that fits this purpose.

Mutual learning is what it is all about. It is the core of action towards sustainability. And most cerainly, it is something that we, the EEAC network, have been doing and using to our benefit.

Comparing notes and checking on different ideas not seldom triggers governance issues. Let me introduce the second part of the introductory remarks to this conference by passing the word to Jan de Smedt. Jan de Smedt is the co-chair oft he working group that elaborated the annual statement.

I thank you for your attention.