



Key Messages from “Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication: Africa Regional Dialogue on National Experiences”

On 14 May, 2012 over 50 representatives of governments, civil society, the private sector and UN agencies, attended an event on “Green Economy in the Context of Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication: Africa Regional Dialogue on National Experiences” in Dakar, Senegal. This Dialogue, co-organised by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), is one of a series of informal platforms designed for Member States to share experiences on how they are creating their own approaches and shaping national agendas for green economies as a means for sustainable development and poverty reduction.

This event took place back-to-back with a one-day civil society dialogue on the MDGs, Rio+20 and post-2015 framework, as well as a three-day Inter-Regional Learning Meeting on national preparations for Rio+20.

The Africa Regional Dialogue highlighted that groups within and across countries have different understandings of “green economy”. While noting the need for conceptual clarity, many participants stressed that it is more strategic to identify the elements of inclusive, integrated green economy policies, rather than try to agree on a common definition. This is particularly important given that there are potentially many different pathways for greening economies depending on national priorities and country contexts, which could include low-carbon development and climate resilience, resource and energy efficiency, social equity, poverty reduction and decent job creation, as well as environmental benefits.

Panelists from Ethiopia, Ghana, Mali, Mozambique, Niger and Uganda discussed their national experiences related to Frameworks for Action and Means of Implementation for the transition to more inclusive, greener economies. As noted by panelists, there are several different kinds of national initiatives. These range from comprehensive programmes such as Ethiopia’s Climate-Resilient Green Economy strategy through which the country seeks to achieve middle-income status by 2025, to targeted initiatives such as Ghana’s successful reform of fuel subsidies, a policy that enabled the country to redirect public spending to expand primary education and finance health care for poor communities.

Many participants highlighted the need to address the social dimensions of green economy policy options and trade-offs, and the importance of approaching these and related initiatives in the context of sustainable development, poverty eradication and equity. A point was made that moving towards greener economies would entail reforms in certain sectors of the economy, which may have social implications that need to be considered carefully. Hence, in some cases, governments will need to make trade-offs to balance short-term socio-economic costs with long-term gains.

Many stressed the importance of involving in the Rio+20 process and its follow up ministries of finance, planning and economic development so that new approaches and ideas can be anchored into the development agenda.

Participants agreed on the important role that the private sector can play to reduce poverty and create jobs, noting that private investment can only be driven by clear policy frameworks, incentives, public-private partnerships and the enhancement of communication, education, and training. Public-private partnerships (PPP) geared towards community level activities deserve particular attention, as many PPP tend to concern only large-scale projects and initiatives.

Energy, water and agriculture emerged as central and structuring themes for many in discussing a transition to greener economies. In addition, it was pointed out that population growth constitutes a factor bringing new dimensions to poverty.

Other key message revolved around the importance of meeting past commitments notably by developed countries, and through South-South cooperation, gender mainstreaming and participation.

It was noted that the development of conceptual approaches, including measurable indicators would help monitor and assess progress. In this context, the experience with the Human Development Indices, a methodology applicable to different country contexts, was mentioned as a possible reference.

Participants highlighted implementation challenges including financing, human capacity, awareness-raising across stakeholders, and institutional and governance frameworks. It was noted that UN Country Teams could contribute much in developing national capacities for green economy policy making.