



COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION



Rio+20: towards achieving sustainable development by greening the economy and improving governance

- Council conclusions -

3118th ENVIRONMENT Council meeting

Luxembourg, 10 October 2011

The Council adopted the following conclusions:

"CONSIDERING that the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ("Rio+20"), convened by UNGA Resolution 64/236 to be held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro, offers a unique opportunity for our mutually interdependent world to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development at all levels, as well as to assess the progress made to date, identify remaining implementation gaps and address new and emerging challenges since the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg in 2002,

HAVING IN MIND that while some progress has been made in advancing sustainable development over the last decennia, around 1.4 billion people, mostly in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, still live in extreme poverty and that one sixth of the world's population is undernourished; that unsustainable economic growth has increased the stress on the earth's limited natural resources and on the carrying capacity of the ecosystems, with 60% of the world's natural resources already being used unsustainably or at their limit; that many environmental problems have not been solved and have become more acute; and that economic, social and environmental problems are closely linked,

NOTING that over the past two decades the global economic and political situation has been changing, entailing new roles and responsibilities,

P R E S S

CONFIRMING that Rio+20 should focus on strengthening the coherence and enhancing the linkages between the environmental, economic and social dimensions of sustainable development and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 and of other relevant internationally agreed goals in the context of major UN conferences, in particular Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and BEARING IN MIND that the two themes of Rio+20 -Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and Institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD)- offer promising ways to tackle remaining challenges,

CONSIDERING that Rio+20 should accelerate and broaden the world-wide transition towards a green economy that promotes sustainable development and contributes to poverty eradication around the world; EMPHASIZING that a green economy offers win-win opportunities to all countries, regardless of the structure of their economy and their level of development,

RECOGNISING that the weakness of the current institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD) hinders the effective implementation of the objectives agreed at previous international conferences and summits; CONSIDERING that strengthening the international environmental governance is central to the pursuance of sustainable development and UNDERSCORING that the needed reform of the IFSD also requires a bottom-up perspective, drawing on lessons learned at all levels,

STRESSING the importance of democratic development and respect for human rights to achieve sustainable development in all its dimensions; RECOGNIZING democracy, the rule of law, transparency and accountability as means to meet social, economic and environmental challenges; EMPHASIZING the importance of access to water, food, health services and education, as well as the right of men and women to live in peace, justice and dignity; and UNDERLINING the importance of gender equality and the vital role that women have in achieving sustainable development,

RECALLING the June 2005 European Council Conclusions on sustainable development and international environmental governance; the 2005 European Consensus on Development; the renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy adopted by the European Council on 16 June 2006; the Council Conclusions of 21 October 2009 on Eco-efficient economy in the context of the post-Lisbon Agenda ¹, those of 11 June 2010 on the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development "Rio+20" ², and those of 20 December 2010 on improving environmental policy instruments; the Europe 2020 Strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth adopted by the European Council on 17 June 2010; and the Council Conclusions on education for sustainable development of 17-18 November 2010 ³,

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A strong commitment for an ambitious outcome

1. REAFFIRMS that the European Union and its Member States remain strongly committed to playing an active and constructive role in the preparatory process of Rio+20 with a view to contributing to a successful outcome;

¹ 14891/09.

² 11062/10.

³ 14947/1/10.

2. WELCOMES in this context the Commission Communication "Rio+20: towards the green economy and better governance" ¹ as a valuable contribution for elaborating the EU position for Rio+20;
3. ACKNOWLEDGES the ongoing work on preparations for Rio+20 at UN level; TAKES NOTE of the ongoing work of the UNSG High Level Panel on Global Sustainability;
4. CONSIDERS that in order to give renewed impetus to sustainable development, Rio+20 needs to agree on a shared vision for change, able to deliver results within agreed time frames, and UNDERLINES that the main operational outcomes of the Rio+20 should include a green economy roadmap with specific goals, objectives and actions at international level as well as a package of reforms, which includes the upgrading of UNEP, leading to a strengthened international environmental governance (IEG) as part of a more balanced and effective IFSD;
5. SUPPORTS the active participation of all major groups and relevant stakeholders in the preparation of Rio+20 and in the subsequent implementation of its outcomes;

Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

6. STRESSES that the transition towards a green economy holds strong potential to promote long-term sustainable growth, create jobs and hence eradicate poverty; EMPHASIZES the importance of increasing resource efficiency, promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns, tackling climate change, protecting biodiversity, combating desertification, reducing pollution, as well as using and managing natural resources and ecosystems in a sustainable and socially responsible manner, both as requirements and key vehicles to ensure the just transition towards a green economy, and UNDERSCORES that in order to contribute to poverty eradication, green economy policies and measures need to take into account the demands of the poor;
7. CONSIDERS that Rio+20 should in particular promote global cooperative action in key sectors such as water, food and agriculture, fisheries, forestry, energy, marine environment and chemicals, as well as in areas related to the sustainable management and restoration of natural resources and ecosystem services;
8. UNDERLINES that in order to move to a green economy, decouple economic growth from the use of natural resources and stimulate markets in the areas mentioned above, enabling conditions need to be established, both in the form of regulatory and market-based instruments, including fiscal measures and the gradual elimination of subsidies that have considerable negative effects on the environment and are incompatible with sustainable development, as well as through voluntary schemes; and EMPHASIZES that the path towards green economy should be country specific;
9. UNDERLINES the key role of the private sector, including all types of enterprises, in delivering green growth through trade, investment, research and development, innovation and resource efficiency, and CALLS ON the private sector to seek opportunities from green economy -including through corporate social responsibility (CSR)- as well as from life-cycle and supply chain analysis, and new, sustainable business models;

¹ 11845/11 - COM(2011)363 final.

10. REAFFIRMS that Rio+20 should contribute to reorienting the current models of economic growth and that in order to measure progress towards green economy, Rio+20 should also contribute to the adoption of a new set of indicators complementing GDP and that integrate economic, social and environmental dimensions in a balanced manner;

Institutional framework for sustainable development

11. UNDERSCORES the importance of governance for sustainable development at all levels and the need for a reformed IFSD that is better prepared to respond to current and future challenges, to more efficiently bridge gaps in the implementation of the sustainable development agenda as well as to accelerate global action towards a greener and more sustainable economy and eradication of poverty worldwide;
12. CALLS FOR improved coherence across the UN system and for an ambitious reform that might *inter alia* include a revision of the roles of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development and ECOSOC, as well as for an enhanced involvement of the international financial institutions (IFIs) in the process;
13. UNDERLINES the need to strengthen IEG as a part of the broader IFSD reform; REITERATES in this context the EU's proposal on the establishment of a UN agency for the environment, based on UNEP, with a revised and strengthened mandate, supported by stable, adequate and predictable financial contributions and operating on an equal footing with other UN specialised agencies, and that this agency should be based in Nairobi; and LOOKS FORWARD to the views of other partners on this issue;
14. UNDERSCORES the need to streamline and reinforce the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) system and to reinforce and mainstream the environmental dimension within the UN system in the context of the System-Wide Coherence and "Delivering as One" initiatives;

Means of implementation

15. UNDERLINES that funding for the implementation of sustainable development policies and actions will have to come from a variety of sources, both public and private, and CALLS for a more effective use of existing resources, as well as the mobilisation of available and identification of innovative sources of finance;
16. UNDERLINES the important role that capacity building, cooperation on technology, research and innovation, education and training programmes and activities play in the implementation of sustainable development policies and actions and STRESSES the need to promote public awareness raising activities and strengthen management tools, in particular on sustainable consumption and production, in order to change behaviour, initiate and facilitate responsible decisions and support the spread of sustainable lifestyles;
17. RECOGNIZES the importance of partnerships at all levels in the key green economy sectors and areas, which can play a leading role in bringing together a range of actors and contributions;

18. RECOGNISES that the private sector, through investment, trade and innovation, has a key role to play in delivering a global green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and that governments should help to ensure that this happens;
19. RECOGNISES the continuing relevance of Official Development Assistance (ODA) as an important catalytical tool, REAFFIRMS the commitment of the EU and its Member States to achieve their collective ODA target by 2015¹ and STRESSES the need to further improve aid effectiveness in line with the principles and commitments of the Paris/Accra agenda;

Final considerations

20. REAFFIRMS that the EU and its Member States are looking forward to an open discussion on the various subjects with all countries and stakeholders, in order to make sure that the outcomes of Rio+20 address our global challenges and ensure tangible, effective and forward-looking, action-oriented and measurable results that have a real and positive impact across the world now and for future generations."

¹ Council conclusions of 23 May 2011 on the First Annual Report to the European Council on EU Development Aid Targets (doc. 10593/1/11 REV 1).