

# **Rio+20 within the context of developing countries**

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# Outline

- Some sustainable development implementation obstacles
- Some new and emerging issues
- Some general perspectives on “green economy” in the Rio+20 process
- UNCSD Preparatory Committee discussion on “green economy”
- Institutional framework for sustainable development
- Some expectations for Rio+20

# 2012 Conference mandate

## *UNGA Resolution 64/236 mandate:*

The objective of the Conference will be to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assessing the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development and addressing new and emerging challenges. The focus of the Conference will include the following themes to be discussed and refined during the preparatory process: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and the institutional framework for sustainable development;

# Some sustainable development implementation obstacles/gaps (1)

- Rio 1992 called for “shift in paradigm” from unsustainable to sustainable development model but this has not happened
- “North-South” compact of Rio 1992 and 1990s UN Summits not fulfilled especially re: means of implementation and weakened political will
- Multiple crises since 1992 but fundamental causes still not addressed

# Some sustainable development implementation obstacles/gaps (2)

- Systemic flaws in economic pillar – GDP still the index for development; global trade system flawed; widespread opposition to bilateral trade agreements between developed and developing countries; structural adjustment conditionalities of IMF; deregulation and financial crises
- Economic competition between industrialised countries and some developing countries (China, Brazil, India)
- Unsustainable consumption and lifestyles spread to developing countries with no fundamental changes in the rich countries
- Social inequities sharpening in almost all countries; continuing and even new poverty; 2015 MDGs target largely elusive
- Ecological crisis building up many of which are transboundary
- Lack of institutional mechanisms and capacity in most developing countries
- Domestic mismanagement

# Some “new and emerging issues”

- Extreme weather events and climate change – “de-carbonising” development
- Sustainable agriculture and food security
- Food prices volatility incl. food commodities speculation
- Water (freshwater and marine)
- Global financial instabilities
- Trade rules out of synchrony with 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges?
- Intellectual property systems out of balance (medicines, food, biological materials, green technologies, knowledge for innovation)
- Urbanisation
- New technologies and the scale of their potential impacts (genetic engineering, nanotechnology, synthetic biology, geoengineering)
- Employment and livelihoods

# Some general perspectives on “green economy” in the Rio+20 process (1)

- General support for “greening the economy” at the national level i.e. strengthening the environmental pillar
- But need for clear context i.e. SD with balanced treatment for economic and social pillars – how can poverty eradication, social justice, livelihoods security etc be addressed at the same time though integration of the 3 pillars
- Progress since Rio 1992 in the rights-based approach (UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; Human Rights Council; Water as a human right; reports of the Special UN Rapporteurs on the Right to Food, the Right to Health)

## **Some general perspectives on “green economy” in the Rio+20 process (2)**

- Green economies that are diverse and de-centralized building on the best of traditional and modern knowledge systems – technologies are only part of the solution
- Comprehensive technology assessment (ecological, social, economic, cultural, ethical)
- Concerns over “commodification of nature” – nature as just another economic capital, creating more natural resource conflicts with indigenous peoples and local communities, between nationals and foreign investors, between current and future generations

# UNCSD Preparatory Committee discussion on “green economy” (1)

- No common understanding of the concept
- Concerns of many developing countries: sustainable development with 3 pillars will be sidelined; potential “green protectionism” in trade arena (unilateral measures in climate arena) and new conditionalities in development aid
- G77/China: No re-negotiation of Rio Principles and commitments; must strengthen political commitment to implement Rio commitments and JPOI (WSSD)
- European Union has proposed a roadmap for green economy
- Report by Panel of Experts on “The Transition to a Green Economy: Benefits, Challenges and Risks from a Sustainable Development Perspective” (UNDESA DSD, UNEP, UNCTAD)

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=12&menu=45>

“Care has to be taken to ensure that the “green economy” term and concept is also understood to include the social, equity and development dimensions, including the need for international provision of finance and technology and accompanying global economic reforms and that the risks of the misuse of the term are adequately addressed.” (one of the expert papers from report commissioned by UN DESA et al)

<http://www.uncsd2012.org/rio20/index.php?page=view&type=400&nr=12&menu=45>

# UNCSD Preparatory Committee discussion on “green economy” (2)

- Latin America/Caribbean regional preparatory meeting (7-9 September) – no reference to “green economy” in the final conclusions
- Colombia/Guatemala have informally distributed a paper on “Sustainable Development” goals – cautious reactions from developing countries with some positive reactions from some developed and developing countries

# Institutional framework for sustainable development – some views (1)

- At the global level a Council on Sustainable Development under the UN General Assembly for high level coordination and to reflect political commitment
- Turning the Trusteeship Council into a Sustainable Development Council
- “Umbrella” structure for sustainable development
- EU and some NGOs support a World Environment Organization; majority of developing countries and NGOs do not – consensus on an “enhanced UNEP”

# Institutional framework for sustainable development – some views (2)

- How can *integration* of the 3 pillars of sustainable development take place?
- Not just about “coordination” within UN system but also the transformation of institutions under each pillar
- Institutions responsible for economic dimension are still largely separate – need for a central role for UN with regards to *economic policy* as envisaged in the UN Charter thus a clearer role for ECOSOC
- National level transformation – crucial and necessary foundation where integration of the 3 pillars needs to be central

# Some expectations for Rio+20 (1)

- Reaffirm agreed principles of Rio 1992 – common but differentiated responsibilities (equity within and between countries; intergenerational equity); polluter pays; precautionary principle; etc – and UN commitments/treaties
- Recognise the massive transformation in society that is needed – production and consumption patterns, “low carbon” economies, social equity, indices based on “well being”, “happiness”, “human rights”, “sustainability”
- Overcome constraints at the global level that reduce national policy space for sustainable development (e.g. WTO rules; bilateral “trade” agreements that cover almost all sectors of national development; financial instability; multilateralism and regional/South-South cooperation instead of unilateralism and “race to the bottom” competition)

## **Some expectations for Rio+20 (2)**

- Regulation and corporate accountability to address impacts of increasing corporate concentration on sustainable development (e.g. lessons from financial crisis; food commodities speculation; intellectual property norms and systems that are not balanced; etc)
- Mainstream contributions of communities, small and medium sized entrepreneurs (agriculture, industry, services etc) and support scaling up
- Role of the state in restoring balance between public interests and corporate/private sector
- Role of civil society organisations (CSOs) and citizens – in the context of Rio Declaration Principle 10 in contributing to sustainable development policy making and implementation