

Eco-Forum statement on Green Economy

CEP-19

Janis Brizga, Green Liberty on behalf of European ECO Forum

Thank you chairman,

Good afternoon ladies and gentleman,

Green economy has become an important discussion point in different international and national multistakeholder fora. However there is no single agreed definition of green economy. Some speak about green growth and green economy on top of the brown economy, others talk about the need for the green economy to replace existing brown economic sectors or degrowth as the only way out of the existing multiple crises.

Some groups are working on supply side management – trying to make industries more eco-efficient; others focus on demand side – changing lifestyles and livelihoods of people.

We endorse governmental initiative to support green economy in the UN ECE region. We fully agree that we have to apply effective combinations of policy instruments to promote resource efficiency and life cycle approach, to build markets for sustainable products and services, to create green jobs, to promote green investment, to transfer environmentally sound technologies to various economic sectors and to support research, innovations, education and training to secure the achievements of a green economy.

However we believe that this will not automatically:

- lead to a **fair distribution of resources**, which is the base for an economic security and prosperity for all;
- change public **values, norms and behaviour** patterns to ensure living within the **carrying capacity** of the Earth, and
- eradicate poverty and improve quality of life.

Green economy should address the overarching objective of changing consumption and production patterns – highlighted at WSSD. Current government initiatives mostly focus on one part of this objective – improving efficiency, creating green jobs, green investment and green production, while neglecting steps towards sufficiency. So we see here clear '**policy gap**' when we talk about green economy. As current approach will not bring us to sustainable development if we don't address both production and consumption patterns to eradicate existing destructive economic activities and ensure fair distribution of resources.

Technological solutions and resource efficiency is not enough. Even if production becomes more eco-efficient, increasing consumption and population pressures result in greater resource depletion. Current lifestyles depend on **overuse of natural resources**. The finite natural world cannot support the infinite growth of resource exploitation. Green economy policies and

practices need to take into account the social and biophysical limits to economic growth. We need **resource capping** in governmental and other institutional discussions, and develop economically and socially acceptable caps for all kinds of natural resources. Therefore one of the priorities should be to set up **baselines for resource use** on the global and the national level and identify **thresholds** within which our economies have to operate.

We need to move from the current **obsession with “GDP growth”** to prioritizing economic security and prosperity for everyone, within the carrying capacity of the earth. We need to stimulate **societal change**, where material wealth is not seen as the only criteria of prosperity. We need to encourage values and norms for a sustainable way of living.

We need to establish a new set of measures, indexes and indicators of progress beyond the current focus on increasing efficiency, production, consumption and exports. Nature should be recognized as the foundation of our life and the precondition for our **long-term wellbeing** of our societies, and not – as currently perceived – an unlimited resource for economic growth. **Development of human capital** should become the basis for our economic progress, moving away from natural capital extraction.

We need **cooperation of all stakeholders**, - governments, business and civil society - to support transition to green economy. We call for **regulatory frameworks for corporate accountability** in addition to existing corporate social responsibility initiatives. Green economy should promote **fair trade** and socially responsible use and **distribution** of resources.

Governments, international and private actors need to increase investments in research, innovations, education and training for a transition to green economies. We call for a **shift in current research funding** in the EU - and other countries - from its current focus on nuclear industry and other unsustainable economic sectors to green economic sectors.

We need investment of natural resources, money and labour for green economy to function properly. The **current financial systems do not actively support a transition** to the green economy. Therefore one of the priorities should be to **regulation of the financial markets**, reform of the IFIs, develop mechanisms to bring natural capital valuation into national accounting, inclusion of externalities into prices and introduction of new and innovative financial mechanisms, such as the financial transaction tax, and payment for eco-system services, as a means for financing the transition to the green economy and sustainable development.

Many of the NGOs from the UN ECE region have been working on different aspects of green economy for several decades. Some of them are promoting clean production and ethical investment, others are working to support sustainable lifestyles and livelihoods. This is enormous resource already available and most importantly willing to work for sustainable future and it should be supported by 10-year framework of programmes for sustainable consumption and production if we want to build green economy on the pan-European level.

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