

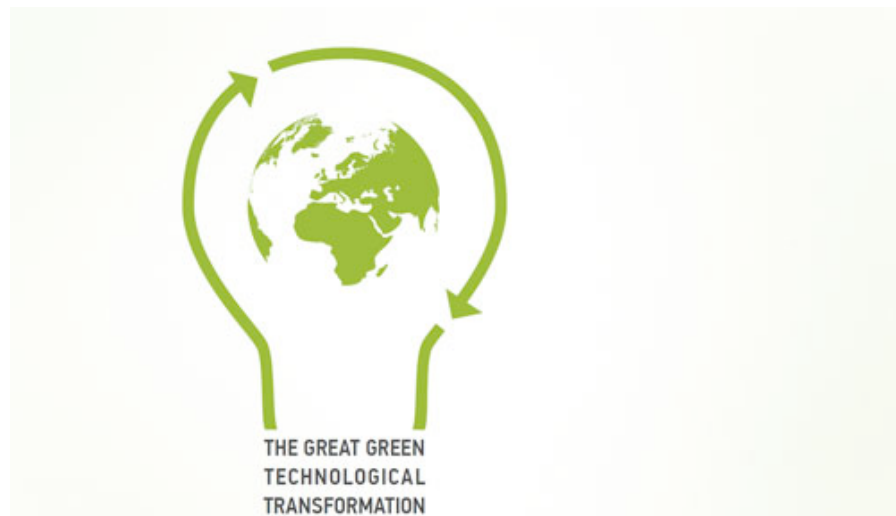


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New industrial revolution needed to avert ‘planetary catastrophe’ – UN report



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Humanity is close to breaching the sustainability of Earth, and needs a technological revolution greater – and faster – than the industrial revolution to avoid “a major planetary catastrophe,” according to a new United Nations report.

Major investments will be needed worldwide in the developing and scaling up of clean energy technologies, sustainable farming and forestry techniques, climate-proofing of infrastructure, and in technologies reducing non-biological degradable waste production, according to [The World Economic and Social Survey 2011: The Great Green Technological Transformation](#), published today by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA).

“It is rapidly expanding energy use, mainly driven by fossil fuels, that explains why humanity is on the verge of breaching planetary sustainability boundaries through global warming, biodiversity loss, and disturbance of the nitrogen-cycle balance and other measures of the sustainability of the earth’s ecosystem,” the report says. “A comprehensive global energy transition is urgently needed in order to avert a major planetary catastrophe.”

The survey says \$1.9 trillion per year will be needed over the next 40 years for incremental investments in green technologies. At least \$1.1 trillion of that will need to be made in developing countries to meet increasing food and energy demands.

“Technological transformation, greater in scale and achievable within a much shorter time frame than the first industrial revolution, is required,” it says. “The necessary set of new technologies must enable today’s poor to attain decent living standards, while reducing emissions and waste and ending the unrestrained drawdown of the Earth’s non-renewable resources.”

“Staging a new technological revolution at a faster pace and on a global scale will call for proactive government intervention and greater international cooperation. Sweeping technological change will require sweeping societal transformation, with changed settlement and consumption patterns and better social values,” it adds.

In the preface to the report, [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon writes that “rather than viewing growth and sustainability as competing goals on a collision course, we must see them as complementary and mutually supportive imperatives. This becomes possible when we embrace a low-carbon, resource-efficient, pro-poor economic model.”

The survey concludes: “Business as usual is not an option. An attempt to overcome world poverty through income growth generated by existing ‘brown technologies’ would exceed the limits of environmental sustainability.”

The report comes out yearly. Last year’s survey called for a major overhaul of the machinery for international finance, aid and trade.

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