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UN officials call for political will to put world on path to green economy



Green Economy

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United Nations officials today appealed for greater political will in both developed and developing countries to make the transition to the “green economy” for sustainable development to protect humanity from environmental disaster and economic ruin which might result from current dependence on non-renewable energy.

“Will we be able to evolve towards a green economy and sustainable development? Will we be able to stop destroying ourselves?,” asked Joseph Deiss, the President of the UN General Assembly in his [remarks](#) to the Assembly’s debate on the green economy.

“There is resistance to be overcome. Mobilizing the attention of the public and the political decision-makers on environmental issues is difficult. The short span of an election cycle allows only the costs of the investments necessary to change the model to be seen. It does not see the longer-term benefits. We should henceforth think differently about this,” said Mr. Deiss.

Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro [stressed](#) that the “business as usual” method of running economies was no longer sustainable, noting that there will be “upfront costs that can seem like an insurmountable burden, even though – over the course of time – they will reap lasting benefits.”

“Developed countries possess advanced technologies and institutional capacity, but need to demonstrate political impetus critical to make transformative change. Developing countries face an array of challenges. But they also stand to benefit enormously by leapfrogging over heavily polluting 19th-century technologies to pursue a 21st-century clean energy pathway,” said Ms. Migiro.

Mr. Deiss stressed that while there is currently no internationally recognized definition of “green economy,” the term implied “decoupling economic growth from the use of fossil fuels and non-renewable energy sources.”

“Current activities must be made ‘greener’ and it will be necessary to develop clean technologies and green goods and services,” he said.

Outlining the measures that could encourage both producers and consumers to adopt environmentally-friendly behaviour, Mr. Deiss mentioned a broad range of approaches, including subsidies, environmental taxes and paying for pollution rights, while underlining the need to eliminate subsidies harmful to the environment, such as those that promote the use of fossil fuels.

“The green economy can take different forms, depending on the context of each country, its level of development, and its geographic location in particular,” said Mr. Deiss. “Some will begin by greening their transport infrastructure, others will prefer to promote ecotourism or organic agriculture,” he said.

He said adopting greener economic models would require structural changes, with job losses in certain sectors and gains in others.

Ms. Migiro emphasized that the green economy must be adapted to specific national circumstances, with each country determining how it can work for its people and for the planet.

“For countries where poverty is rife, green economy measures must create abundant jobs and sustainable livelihoods. For countries that depend heavily on raw material exports, green economy measures must not displace vital economic sectors, but instead create dynamic new growth sectors,” she added.

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