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Business leaders participate in UN-backed debate on green economy



14 April 2011 – Some 200 representatives from business and industry, governments and civil society have concluded United Nations-supported [discussions](#) in Paris on the role of the private sector in the global transition towards a low carbon, resource-efficient green economy.

The two-day “Business and Industry Global Dialogue” this week was organized by the UN Environment Programme ([UNEP](#)), in collaboration with the International Chamber of Commerce and the French postal service Le Groupe La Poste, which hosted the event at its Paris headquarters.

The event began with opening addresses by Achim Steiner, the UNEP Executive Director, Jean-Guy Carrier, the Secretary General of the International Chamber of Commerce and Jean-Paul Bailly, the Chief Executive Officer of Le Groupe La Poste.

Sylvie Lemmet, Director of UNEP's Paris-based Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, delivered a keynote presentation on UNEP's Green Economy Report and stressed how engagement from the private sector is crucial for the scaling-up of a green economy on the road to next year's UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio 2012).

A high-level panel followed with representatives from the UN Global Compact, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Danish foreign ministry and Hungary's Deputy State Secretary for Green Economy and Climate Change.

Members of the private sector later discussed the opportunities and challenges outlined in the report with a panel that included the International Chamber of Commerce Task Force on Green Economy and the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

Participants had a chance to envision and map out their contributions to the Rio 2012 conference.

During the dialogue, Katrina Destrée Cochran, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility at telecommunications company Alcatel-Lucent, stressed the importance of measuring the environmental and economic effects of “business as usual” practices.

There were also calls from business leaders to encourage greater investment in sustainable practices.

UNEP’s Green Economy Report, released in February, challenges the myth that investing in the environment comes at the expense of economic growth.

The report shows how redirecting 2 per cent of global gross domestic product into 10 key sectors – from forests and energy to fisheries and transport – can boost green growth and create more jobs than a “business as usual” model, while using the planet’s resources in a more sustainable way.

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