

**Presentation / Statement by
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Conventions, UNEP on the occasion of the
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**Global Perspective on the Green Economy
(UNEP Green Economy Initiative)**

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Earlier in the morning I have highlighted the sustainability crises facing the world such as climate change, a challenge facing the Pacific Islands countries severely, biodiversity loss, land degradation and water shortage. Some of the causes are closely linked with economic activities aimed at maximizing wealth from natural capital to improve human well-being. I have also highlighted that approaches such as the Green Economy can be a response to tackling the sustainability crises.

This means that we need to reassess the way in which we have been consuming resources and the way in which we have been conducting business in the past to see where we have gone wrong and where possible to put things in order. We need to refocus ourselves and move toward greener paths or apply environmentally friendly approaches of doing business or consuming resources. It is in this regard that the Green Economy comes in to play. As I have also alluded to earlier, UNEP has launched its Green Economy Initiative to support countries to refocus and move in a new direction of environmentally friendly ways of conducting business.

The Green Economy is more than just green growth. It cuts across many sectors of society including the creation of employment opportunities, the encouragement and use of cleaner technologies, boosting of national economies, development and poverty alleviation.

The purpose of the UNEP-led Green Economy Initiative is to provide the analysis and policy support for investing in green sectors and in greening environmental unfriendly sectors. It is important for the sustenance of direct and indirect benefits yielded, which needs to be maintained by environmentally-friendly approaches, partly through provision of advisory services to governments and research by agencies through the United Nations system.

UNEP has recently launched its Green Economy Report. The Report has a relevance to the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) including the Pacific Islands Countries. It is in this context that the Report has contributed to the analysis of implications of green investment in SIDS, in industries such as tourism and fisheries, which contribute significantly to the countries' economies.

For instance, in 2005 the total catch from the world's marine capture fisheries rose from 16.7 million tonnes in 1950 to 80.2 million tonnes. Total landed value (gross output value) of the world's marine capture fisheries was about US\$20 billion in 1950 and steadily grew to about US\$100 billion in the late 1970s. It remained at that level throughout the 1980s, despite further increases in the total landings. Landed values have declined, falling from around US\$100 billion to almost US\$90 billion.

The challenges posed by this activity are the risk of depleting species due to overfishing due to spatial expansion of marine fisheries around the world, (most notably in the North Atlantic and South Pacific). Also, fisheries subsidies (financial transfers which help the sector make more profit than it would otherwise) reduce the costs of fishing or increase revenues.

The two major effects identified are the decline in supply from fisheries and the decrease in supplies in fish and aquaculture from farms and the wild. The political implications of subsidies have also been cited over-capitalization of global fisheries, resulting in the depletion of fishery resources, industrial degradation of coastal environments, infrastructure challenges and global forces must also be addressed.

Some of the proposed measures to respond to these challenges include halting the fishing of vulnerable, overexploited species and establishing conditions so that stocks can recover. It is also necessary to help consumers make informed decisions in terms of sustainability about their consumption of fish products.

The UNEP Green Economy Initiative also addresses investing in energy and resource efficiency. This can be done through renewable energy, which aims at developing a renewable and sustainable energy system; reduce dependence on fossil fuels thus reducing greenhouse gas emissions and pollution. This is especially significant to the region, by presenting modern renewable sources of energy, which offer considerable potential for enhancing energy security. Energy demand is growing rapidly.

On a comparative perspective, expenditure on oil alone increased from 1 per cent of global GDP in 1998 to around 4 per cent at the peak in 2007, and it is projected to remain high in the period to 2030. There are four major challenges with respect to this sector:

- increasing energy demand and concern over energy security;
- combating climate change;
- reducing pollution and public-health hazards; and,
- addressing energy poverty.

About half of the cost of damages of climate change will be borne by developing countries in the future. They have been estimated by the UNFCCC to be at least US\$49 to 171 billion by 2030. In response to these challenges governments have taken measures such as setting policy targets for their countries more than half of which are being set from developing countries.

There are four major opportunities supporting a strategy of increased investments in renewable energy, as part of greening the energy sector:

- the existence of clear policy targets in many countries;
- technological advances that improve competitiveness;
- a recent strengthening of growth in renewable energy investments; and,
- the potential of renewable energy projects for creating jobs.

A number of roadblocks still remain on the route towards a green energy sector. They include uncertainties and risks associated with new technologies, incentives for private innovation which generates positive social externalities, institutional and human capacity in managing new technologies.

In addition to fisheries and renewable energy sectors, tourism is another sector that has been analyzed in the context of the Green Economy. The tourism economy represents 5 per cent of the world GDP, while it contributes to 6-7 per cent of total employment.

In 60 countries the tourism industry is the top export, the main source of foreign exchange for one-third of developing countries and one-half of LDCs. Green tourism has the potential to create new jobs and reduce poverty. A greener tourism sector has the potential to efficiency improvements in energy, water, and waste systems, and is expected to reinforce the employment potential of the sector with increased local hiring and sourcing and significant opportunities, which is bears relevance to governments that wish to enhance their economies.

We also need to be made aware of some of the challenges related to sustainability that the tourism sector faces. They include the following: water consumption, waste management, GHG emissions and the loss of biological diversity. Future emissions from the tourism sector are expected to increase substantially, with increase in global travel. Tourism is estimated to create about 5 per cent of total GHG emissions (1,302 Mt CO₂), primarily from tourist transport (75 per cent) and accommodation and over the next 30-50 years, GHG emissions from the tourism sector are projected to grow substantially.

In making tourism more sustainable, increased investment in water and energy would be necessary. Benefits that would be yielded from this include conservation of biological diversity, through green water transport, resilient water supply and others. Creating enabling conditions that would assist in overcoming barriers towards a green tourism sector is a long term response to facing the challenges mentioned.

Making the Green Economy work would require the involvement of many stakeholders and the inclusion of the private sector in this process is high on the list of priorities. This would help supplement fiscal policies and economic measures that are to be taken to improve the sector.

I have briefly highlighted some of the challenges and opportunities that exist in the green economy. It is important to be aware of the challenges so we look for ways to tackle them. Where there are opportunities it might be useful to explore them further. This is not to say that countries are quiet on this. Some countries around the world, and I am sure in the Pacific too, countries have embarked on exploring the idea of Green Economy.

Having said that, I would also like to stress that in order for the Green Economy to function, we need the right kind of institutional, regulatory and policy frameworks at the national level.

It is in this context of policy analysis and support that I would like to conclude and mention that UNEP through the Green Economy Initiative has the expertise both in-house and through its networks that it can offer countries that require support.