

**UNITED NATIONS – 2nd MEETING OF THE PREPARATORY
COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE
ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT 2012**

New York, 7 - 8 March 2011

Session 2: Theme 1 of the Conference

*A green economy in the context of sustainable development
and poverty eradication*

Monday, 7th of March 2011

Statement of Italy

*Delivered by Mr. Alessandro Busacca – Minister Plenipotentiary
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Distinguished Co-Chairs,
Mr. Secretary General of the Conference,
Dear Colleagues,

Italy aligns itself to the statement made by the EU delegation on behalf of the European Union and would like to add a few remarks of its own.

My country considers the work to be done on green economy as fundamental for the success of the UNCSA.

As pointed out in the EU intervention, we do not need to start from scratch. The discussions we had during the inter-session meeting in January, as well as the latest report of the Secretary General, the joint report of UNDESA-UNEP and UNCTAD and - last, but not least - the green economy report of UNEP have provided a set of important concepts which may guide us in the continuation of our debate.

First, it is clear that the green economy, rather than replacing sustainable development, should be considered as a driving force to achieving it, being instrumental to the reduction of environmental risks and ecological scarcities, as well as to the improvement of human well-being and social equity.

Along the same line, it should also be clear that, in the medium-long run, an effective green economy strategy will be a powerful drive for delivering growth, increase employment and eradicate poverty. Transitional difficulties must not be neglected and have to be adequately addressed, but should not be seen as an obstacle to fundamental changes.

It is equally evident that economic growth should be decoupled from the ongoing rundown of our natural resources. The status quo, the preservation of the economic models of the last century, are unlikely to assist in achieving the multiple goals the International Community has to face up, from combating climate change to supplying drinkable water, from improving energy efficiency to eradicating poverty.

Moving towards a green economy has the potential to achieve sustainable development and poverty eradication at a new scale and speed. The UN Conference on Sustainable Development provides us with a unique opportunity to ignite such a transition to a fairer, equitable and responsible economy. In order not to miss it, we should agree in Brazil on a series of concrete and operative steps (call it “green economy road-map” or “green economy pathway”), based on a multi-stakeholders agenda with mutually reinforcing measures agreed at the international, regional and national level.

All actors will be needed in this process, but I would like to emphasize the fundamental importance of a full involvement of the private sector. The structural changes and the scale of financing required for a green economy transition cannot be achieved without the participation and the active contribution of the private business.

Here too, we do not need to start from scratch, as there are already promising signs of increasing private investments in green technologies. The task of Governments and International institutions is to define regulatory frameworks that support private sector's commitment towards green investments. They also have to devise market-based instruments in order to mobilize innovative financing for green purposes.

In Italy, for example, we have developed the so-called "white certificates scheme" – a trading mechanism aimed at promoting energy efficiency which has proved effective in delivering energy savings in a cost-effective manner.

We believe that Small and Medium Enterprises, in particular, have the potential to become key-players in the process of expansion of the green economy. Because of their size and dynamism, they are more likely to adapt faster than big companies to the new environmental standards. What they need from Governments is improved regulatory frameworks, easier access to international markets and supporting incentives.

Trade is another fundamental factor in any strategy aiming at achieving a green economy. Removing environmentally harmful subsidies, especially those to fossil fuels, should be the first step of a green trade agenda aimed at eliminating the environmental distortions of the existing economic system.

In such a framework, public investments and tax incentives in areas that stimulate the greening of economic sectors and the transition towards sustainable patterns need to be further explored.

Transportation, urban living, recycling, energy efficiency and renewable energies are the areas where Governments can really make the difference in leading the process of transformation of their national economies.

Environmental taxes and green taxes reforms, to be tailored to national requirements, may be further important tools, as they can help to integrate – in market processes – values which have been too long disregarded.

In conclusion, we believe that the time will be ripe at the UNCSO for agreeing on a common path of transition towards green economy. Let's work hard in the coming months to prepare for this historical opportunity.

Thank you.