



Panel discussion on
The green economy: A breakthrough for sustainable development?

Wednesday, 19 October, 9 – 11.30 a.m.

In June 2012, a major UN conference will be held in Rio de Janeiro to assess progress in meeting the international commitments on sustainable development that had been adopted by States in the same city 20 years ago. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), also known as the Rio+20 Conference, will focus on two main themes: the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty reduction; and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

The concept of sustainable development is often confused with that of environmental sustainability, but it is in reality a broader and more complex construct that is premised on the merging of the environmental (quality), social (equity) and economic (prosperity) dimensions into a single policy approach. The sustainable development agenda relates to both developed and developing countries and by and large remains today mostly unrealized: the economy is using up far more resources than can be replaced or preserved; almost all natural assets - from forests to oceans and biodiversity - are under threat, and this at the cost of a lower quality of life; and poverty and inequality persist in spite of an overall increase in total wealth.

Parliamentarians have long been concerned with this agenda. Over the years, the IPU has held debates and adopted resolutions that have touched on several aspects of sustainability. In preparation for the Rio+20 Conference next year, it is proposed that a panel debate be organized during the forthcoming session of the IPU Committee on United Nations Affairs, to be held on the occasion of the 125th IPU Assembly.

In order to keep the panel manageable and immediately relevant to its target parliamentary audience, it will focus primarily on the substantive issues of the Rio+20 Conference that relate to the question of the green economy. Indeed, there is no agreed definition of "green economy" and many questions remain about its potential risks and benefits. The panel is intended to provide an opportunity for parliamentarians to contribute to that discussion.

The panel discussion will be divided into two segments as follows:

Introduction (9 – 9.45 a.m.)

The introduction will provide a general presentation on the state of sustainable development today, the global political and economic context, and the specific purpose of the Rio+20 Summit.

Moderator: Mr. Hugo Napoleao, a member of the Chamber of Deputies of Brazil (*confirmed*)

Presenters:

- Mr. Janos Pasztor, Executive Secretary, UN Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Global Sustainability
- Mr. Farooq Ullah, Head of Policy and Advocacy, Stakeholder Forum for a Sustainable Future

Thematic debate: The green economy (9.45 – 11.30 a.m.)

There are different meanings and applications of the term "green economy", and its attendant green technologies, as well as questions about the conditions required for the concept to fully capture all three dimensions of sustainable development. This session will provide a critical perspective on the green economy particularly from the standpoint of the following three objectives of the broader sustainable development agenda: changing production and consumption patterns; dissociating economic growth from environmental degradation; and achieving equity, poverty reduction and greater well-being for all.

Presenters:

- Mr. Steven Stone, Director, Economics and Trade Branch, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
- Mr. Steen Gade, a member of parliament from Denmark, President of GLOBE (Global Legislators Organization for a Balanced Environment) Europe
- Mr. Bertrand Piccard, Chairman, Solar Impulse, Switzerland
- Mr. Oliver Greenfield, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)