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DEVELOPMENT

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) Retreat for Permanent Representatives
on the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

Greentree, 30 September 2011

Mr. Chair,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honoured to be here today.

I thank the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) for organizing this timely retreat.

Today's programme provides a useful opportunity for preparation for Rio+20. Our gathering will help us focus on what to expect, and how to ensure a successful outcome.

I would like to share some ideas that I hope will help facilitate your discussions.

The vision of the international community is clear.

We want a world without poverty... a world where all people can develop and grow on a healthy planet.

But how do we realize that vision, simple and straightforward as it is?

First, we must build consensus on the way forward. And there is growing convergence on a number of points.

In particular, three main elements have gathered broad support during the preparatory process:
(i) integration, (ii) implementation and (iii) coherence.

- (i) Integration of the three pillars of sustainable development
- (ii) implementation of the sustainable development agenda in an effective manner; and
- (iii) coherence of policies and programmes.

These three elements are relevant to both themes of the conference: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

Also, in all meetings so far, I have heard a clear call for implementing agreed principles and commitments. These include the Rio principles, Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.

The aim of Rio+20 is not to invent new principles. The aim is to ensure we stay true to the promises we made and move ahead on implementation at an accelerated pace.

Let me touch on the first theme: a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication.

I am pleased this topic has triggered energetic discussion so far.

Many countries are embarking on shifting their economies onto greener growth paths. There are valuable experiences to share.

Indeed, a number of you have already highlighted lessons learned during the preparatory process.

A possible agreement at Rio+20 could encompass a set of guidelines, with their applications based on country-specific circumstances.

Let me first state what a green economy is *not*.

- It is *not* a top-down imposition of a cookie-cutter, one-size-fits-all model of development.
- It is *not* an excuse for new forms of green protectionism or aid conditionalities.
- It is *not* a device for establishing corporate control over our natural world.
- Neither is it an excuse for business as usual in public and private sector management.

Green economy is a new way of approaching economic decision making – in both the public and private sectors. Now let me turn to what green economy is or should be.

A green economy is one which values nature...and appreciates the multiple ways nature contributes to human well-being.

A green economy is one which puts social concerns front and centre. It contributes to poverty eradication, employment creation and social inclusion.

A green economy is a tool for operationalizing sustainable development.

So, what do countries need to help them build green economies from the bottom up?

Some have mentioned a green economy road map that could provide guideposts, helping countries to assess their progress and stay on track. This could be supported by a menu of policy options and toolkits of good practices.

Our challenge now is this: to devise a road map, with a menu of policy options and toolkits of practices that can be adapted to bring real benefits to all countries whatever their level of development and resource endowments.

Now I will turn to the second theme of the conference: the institutional framework for sustainable development (IFSD).

These discussions are making progress, highlighting areas of possible convergence.

For example, there is strong emphasis on the current fragmentation of institutions for sustainable development and a need for reform. All of us recognize the need to ensure integration and coherence.

In particular, the suggestion of a sustainable development council is being explored. This body would take on the functions and mandates of the CSD.

It would also raise sustainable development to a higher level and give it greater political weight.

A sustainable development council or a reformed CSD would need to be more effective in monitoring implementation perhaps through voluntary reporting.

Additionally, there is general agreement on strengthening UNFPA. Member States have put forward different options.

Changes at the country level are also needed to ensure coherent implementation. So is more effective collaboration among UN entities.

Finally, I would like to discuss a few priority issues.

We all hope Rio+20 will deliver in a few key areas, as identified by Member States and stakeholders. These include:

- (1) Green Jobs and Social Inclusion - Rio must delineate strategies to ensure that the green economy will create abundant job opportunities;
- (2) Food security and sustainable agriculture - A major breakthrough in agriculture is necessary to meet global food demand. But it must also preserve soils, safeguard water and protect biodiversity;
- (3) Sound water and land management - Closer cooperation is needed to manage water shortages, cope with drought and desertification, and avoid resource conflicts;

And there are others, such as:

- (4) Sustainable cities;
- (5) Management of the oceans;
- (6) Improving resilience and disaster preparedness;
- (7) A particularly important topic for many countries is energy access. There is a proposal on the table for universal access by 2030 and other energy goals relate to energy efficiency and renewables.

There are cross-cutting issues that have also been stressed as priority areas:

- (1) A framework for Sustainable Consumption and Production based on common but differentiated responsibilities. This would greatly facilitate the building of green economies and impact all priority areas.
- (2) Developing countries also continue to be concerned with means of implementation. Notably, this includes access to technology and finance.
- (3) Transfer of technologies: This is necessary for developing countries. But *all* countries would benefit from sharing green technologies and building capabilities to use them.
- (4) Finance: Discussions and negotiations are ongoing in various fora on sustainable development financing. The Parties to the UNFCCC are working on launching the Green Climate Fund. They are also mobilizing sizeable investments for building low-carbon and climate-resilient infrastructure in developing countries.

Developing countries need financing to build green economies. And Rio+20 needs to energize this discussion.

As many of you are aware, there is also growing interest in the elaboration of Sustainable Development Goals building on Millennium Development Goals.

Rio could begin the process of defining these goals, perhaps in the context of the post-2015 development agenda, which must be a sustainable development agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have tried to provide an overview of where we are and where we are headed. We are now at a stage where we can start defining our common vision. We must begin to decide how that vision can be translated into the outcome document.

We need your views on the format, structure and content of the zero draft.

I wish you a fruitful retreat. And I wish us all convergence on the issues that matter most.

Thank you.
