

Statement by UNCTAD ¹
UNCSD Rio+20 PrepCom, 7-8 March 2011
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Mr/Madam Chairperson, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

We are here today to shape our vision for the 2012 Earth Summit. Our aspirations are ambitious. We are calling for the world – consumers, firms and governments alike – to join efforts in making a transition to a green economy. An economy that significantly reduces poverty, improves social, economic and human development, while lowering mankind’s environmental footprint.

Nations embraced this same vision 20 years ago in Rio. Not only through the adoption of the Rio Declaration of Principles, but through a detailed blueprint for action as Agenda 21. UNCTAD therefore concurs with all of those who have stressed that we are not only on the road to Rio+20, but equally important, we are on the road from Rio. Along this road we have successfully raised global awareness of the urgency of adopting more sustainable lifestyles and business models. We have introduced new policies, measures and incentives to make our markets greener. Indeed, markets have, and continue to respond. Demand for greener goods and services continues to rise.

Over the past two decades, environmental impacts have worsened and policy instruments have been put in place that have driven innovation to flourish. Many green goods and services have become commercially viable and their nascent niche markets are making their way to mainstream. Throughout the world, organic food products now have their place on our grocery store shelves, sustainably produced biodiversity products are increasingly sourced and demanded by cosmetics and pharmaceutical industries, recycling canisters line our street corners, compact fluorescent light bulbs illuminate our homes and offices, and a growing number of electric bicycles and cars navigate through our cities. Green services markets are also expanding. Builders are constructing better insulated homes, tour operators have

¹ Delivered by (Lucas Assunção)

established attractive eco-tourism destinations, and utility companies have stepped up their supply capacities for renewable electricity and water.

Chairperson,

Indeed our transition to a green economy has already begun. But, just as we have learnt the hard way with globalization, this transition needs to be managed and steered, keeping it explicitly rooted in the spirit, objectives, principles and operationalization set out in UNCED in 1992. [We are well into a period of transition that will take several decades to complete, not through economic shocks to the global economy, but in a manner that consumers and firms have a chance to adapt. Our transition could and probably should be a smooth process, hopefully without many abrupt dislocations. However, to avoid undesirable disruptions and global imbalances early preventive concerted action is urgently required so that there is ample time for institutions, consumers and firms to progressively merge into the green economy, address related challenges and seize its opportunities. Moreover, let us keep in mind that in the transition to a green economy we seek to reorient our economies, not completely restructure them. The goods and services in demand today will still be in demand tomorrow, the only difference is that they may incorporate new technologies and/or be produced, distributed, consumed and discarded in a more environmentally sustainable way. Nevertheless, a smooth transition will only happen if governments give firms clear and long-term signals about policy direction, and engage in adequate supporting policies and measures. This is why meetings like Rio 2012 are so important.]

Through cross-border trade and investment, globalization has, and will continue to play a catalytic role in deepening consumers' environmental preferences, advancing technological innovation, propagating cleaner production, and stimulating more sustainable delivery of services. At UNCTAD, working as one of the other UN agencies, we assist Member States to integrate environmental and social objectives into trade and investment policies. Climate change mitigation and adaptation, protection of biodiversity, and strengthening local economic linkages to generate jobs and reduce poverty are central thrusts of our work. Our work also seeks to build consensus among governments on questions of international cooperation and governance related to trade. In this way environmental protectionism can and must be

discouraged and an enabling environment can be created for developing countries' production and export of environmental goods and services.

So now as we approach Rio+20 we find ourselves in the advantageous position of being able to assess the progress we have made since we first met in Rio 20 years ago. Where our awareness raising efforts, policies, measures and incentives have been successful, we do need to enhance and build upon them. [A successful and expeditious implementation of the Climate Cancun agreements is a case in point.] Where our efforts and policies have failed, we need to rethink and redesign them.

To extend our contribution to the Rio+20 process, UNCTAD:

- Has launched a new publication series entitled "The road to Rio+20: for a development-led green economy" aimed at discussing many green economy conceptual issues and raising awareness of the opportunities and challenges it presents. The first issue of this series has been distributed here today.
- UNCTAD has also joined efforts with DESA and UNEP in preparing the report Member States have requested on the "Benefits, Challenges and Risks associated with the transition to a Green Economy". This will be presented at a side event tomorrow at 8:30 am in Conference Room 6.
- will participate in the side event on Sustainable Agriculture within a Green Economy tomorrow at 6:15 pm at Conference Room 4.
- Will convene in June this year in Geneva a public symposium on "How to make a fair and equitable transition to a green economy?" to engage dialogue between international organizations, governments and civil society on ways to ensure fair and balanced green growth.
- is currently undertaking a stocktaking exercise of trade, investment and development policy instruments that governments have successfully used to accelerate a green transition in their national economies. The results of, and

recommendarions from our assessment will be presented at the Rio+20 Conference.

- UNCTAD continues to convene intergovernmental expert meetings on key green economy topics. Our meeting in October 2010 showed that a dedicated dialogue is required to clarify best practices in the use of technical standards and subsidies, as these will be essential policy tools in the transition to a green economy. Policy space should be granted to developing countries in their transition to a GE, for example, by allowing for non-actionable subsidies for them under the SCM Agreement. Moreover, we need to “oil the innovation chain” to get new and publicly available technologies to the market, and to developing economies. In November of this year UNCTAD will hold a second expert meeting to focus on the trade and sustainable development implications of a green economy and aim to offer substantive inputs to the trade-related discussions, as an input to this Preparatory Committee.

Chairperson and Distinguished colleagues,

UNCTAD is pleased to be an active supporter of the Rio+20 process. Working in close cooperation with other UN agencies, Member States and civil society we endeavor to contribute substantively to the PrepCom process to ensure fruitful results in Rio next year. We therefore invite Member States and stakeholders to participate in the UNCTAD expert meeting next November. We thank you, Mr/Madam Chairperson, for the opportunity to present our ideas and our work here today.
