



UNITED NATIONS

- Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Division for Social Policy and Development
- Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
- International Labour Organization, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific
- United Nations Environment Programme

Expert Group Meeting on

Green Growth and Green Jobs for Youth

12–13 December 2012

UN Conference Center, Bangkok

Aide-Mémoire

I. Purpose of the meeting

The Division for Social Policy and Development of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, the Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific of the International Labour Organization and the United Nations Environment Program are organizing jointly an expert group meeting on “Green Growth and Green Jobs for Youth” from 12-13 December 2012, at ESCAP headquarters in Bangkok as part of the implementation of the UN system-wide Plan of action of the Second United Nations Decade for the Eradication of Poverty (2008-2017). Promoting green jobs for young people is an important component of the Plan of action.

The meeting is also convened in the context of the General Assembly resolution on the implementation of the Second Decade (66/215) in which the General Assembly encouraged the inter-agency collaboration in sharing knowledge, promoting policy dialogue and strengthening the policy coherence on employment issues. In addition, the outcome of the meeting will contribute to the follow up to the Rio+20 outcome document "The Future we want" with regard to green jobs and youth employment, which *inter alia* “encourages promoting the exchange of information and knowledge on decent work for all and job creation, including green jobs initiatives and related skills”.

The expert group meeting will also build upon the TUNZA Youth Conference for the Green Economy organized in Bandung in September 2011. The Conference spotlighted job opportunities in a green economy but said that the lack of green job initiatives and skill shortages may constrain employment growth and the transition to sustainable development.

It will also be organized as a follow up to the 15th Asia and Pacific Labour Conference (Kyoto, December 2011) which highlighted green jobs as a key component of the labour agenda in the region. The Asia and Pacific region is the first one to do so and it has identified greener growth and green jobs as one of the key priority on labour issues together with youth employment. Inclusive and sustainable development with poverty eradication is a prominent agenda for Asia and the Pacific.

The expert group meeting aims to promote a dialogue among government officials, social partners, academic experts, relevant UN agencies, youth entrepreneurs and associations and other stakeholders on this new emerging topic.

II. Background

Climate change and the excessive use of scarce natural resources are prompting calls for a shift towards more sustainable development and a green economy¹. At the same time, this shift should also be socially inclusive, reduce poverty, enhance equity and create jobs and decent work for all.

In a green economy, growth in income and employment should be driven by investments that reduce carbon emissions and pollution, enhance energy and resource efficiency, and prevent loss of ecosystem services. These investments need to be supported by targeted public expenditure to stimulate the greening of economic sectors and policy reforms.

To make the transition to green economy, the enabling conditions are required. These conditions include sound national regulatory frameworks, policies, subsidies and incentives, and international market and legal infrastructure.

The creation of green jobs is therefore an important part of that transformation in particular for the youth. Green jobs are meant to reduce the environmental impact of economic activity in an enterprise, minimize waste and pollution, increase the energy efficiency or natural resources, and protect ecosystems. Green jobs are also decent and productive jobs.

According to the new report led by the Green Jobs Initiative² the drive towards environmental sustainability and greener economies is gaining momentum. Already, millions of green jobs have been created across a range of sectors. And there is

¹ UNEP defines green economy as one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. UNEP, *Towards a Green Economy, 2011*.

² ILO, Working Towards Sustainable Development. Opportunities for Decent Work and Social Inclusion in Green Economy. 2012

significant potential to create more work opportunities, including for young people. The transformation to a greener economy could generate 15 to 60 million additional jobs globally over the next two decades and lift tens of millions of workers out of poverty and delivering improved livelihoods.

The shift to a green economy is increasing the pace of change in labour markets and skill needs. The ILO study on skills for green jobs³ in 21 countries, which represent 60 per cent of the world population, shows that economies moving towards greener production can seize the potential for job creation if they deal effectively with the coming structural change and transformation of existing jobs. While changes will be felt throughout the economy, eight key sectors are expected to play a central role and will be affected: agriculture, forestry, fishing, energy, resources-intensive manufacturing, recycling, building and transport.

The Rio+20 emphasized that job creation is a top priority for action for sustainable development, as ensuring employment for youth goes hand in hand with sustainable development. Focus on youth may prove to be an important accelerator for making progress on all three dimensions of sustainable development – environmental, economic and social.

Youth are faced with unprecedented levels of unemployment. Youth unemployment has soared in both developed and developing poor countries since the 2008 global financial crisis. Currently 75 million young people are out of work worldwide. In addition, young people are underemployed and trapped in low-skill and poorly paid jobs. Shifting priorities toward greater investment in youth is critical.

The prospects of green economy may offer potential for new jobs to be created for young people, for example in environmental protection and sustainable land management, sustainable tourism, renewable energy sector, energy efficiency, organic farming, sustainable fisheries, recycling, etc. Experience of countries shows that while few new types of occupations emerge in the transition to a green economy, considerable change occurs in existing occupations. Changes in skill profiles happen across all sectors and require adjusting training and skills relevant for green jobs.

To meet this new demand, skills development and training of young people for green and greener occupations is critical. Green entrepreneurship promotion, improving apprenticeship systems, facilitating start-ups, improving access to finance, and involving youth in environmental public employment schemes are needed. At the same time, increased public and private investments in key green sectors and the greening of enterprises would also create work opportunities for youth.

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are particularly important for employment creation. They can play a central role in this shift towards a more sustainable economy and can provide young people with work opportunities. Policies targeting SMEs hold particular promise, as they account for a large share of employment and employment growth in most countries.

³ ILO, Skills for Green Jobs: A Global View, 2011

III. Objectives and methodology

The expert group meeting will attempt to gain a better understanding of the challenges towards creating green jobs, identify promising initiatives and examples for green jobs and youth employment creation, in particular in Asia and the Pacific, and propose policy recommendations at the global, regional and national levels.

The overall objective of the meeting is to link green jobs policies with existing initiatives that are aimed at youth and identify possible synergies between them. It will look at enhancing opportunities for green and decent work creation for youth through investment promotion, skills development, training and entrepreneurship promotion. Promoting micro and small enterprises and providing training and education for young people so they can fully participate in the emerging green economy will be the focus of the meeting.

To accomplish these objectives, experts will be drawn from governments, social partners, academia and practitioners, specialized international agencies, representatives of youth organizations and other partners from across regions, in particular from Asia and the Pacific to provide experiences in the area of creating green jobs for young people.

ILO will present background analysis on green jobs. The exchange of views among the experts will contribute to efforts by countries to develop green jobs strategies with a focus on youth. Opportunities will also be given for exchanges and discussions with the youth from the region, in particular through a panel discussion that will associate experts and youth representatives.

Presentations will be devoted to the discussion of the following questions:

1. What enabling conditions are needed to create green jobs for young people?
2. What are the key challenges in regards to creating green jobs for youth?
3. What are the good practices and initiatives, in particular on skills development for green jobs, green youth entrepreneurship, innovative financing?
4. What policies/innovative strategies are required to promote green jobs with a focus on youth?

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