



Towards a

GREEN economy

Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication



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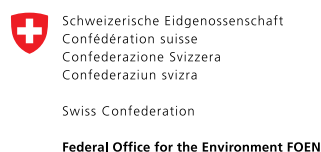
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Foreword

Nearly 20 years after the Earth Summit, nations are again on the Road to Rio, but in a world very different and very changed from that of 1992.

Then we were just glimpsing some of the challenges emerging across the planet from climate change and the loss of species to desertification and land degradation.

Today many of those seemingly far off concerns are becoming a reality with sobering implications for not only achieving the UN's Millennium Development Goals, but challenging the very opportunity for seven billion people – rising to nine billion by 2050 – to be able to thrive, let alone survive.

Rio 1992 did not fail the world – far from it. It provided the vision and important pieces of the multilateral machinery to achieve a sustainable future.

But this will only be possible if the environmental and social pillars of sustainable development are given equal footing with the economic one: where the often invisible engines of sustainability, from forests to freshwaters, are also given equal if not greater weight in development and economic planning.

Towards a Green Economy is among UNEP's key contributions to the Rio+20 process and the overall goal of addressing poverty and delivering a sustainable 21st century.

The report makes a compelling economic and social case for investing two per cent of global GDP in greening ten central sectors of the economy in order to shift development and unleash public and private capital flows onto a low-carbon, resource-efficient path.

Such a transition can catalyse economic activity of at least a comparable size to business as usual, but with


a reduced risk of the crises and shocks increasingly inherent in the existing model.

New ideas are by their very nature disruptive, but far less disruptive than a world running low on drinking water and productive land, set against the backdrop of climate change, extreme weather events and rising natural resource scarcities.

A green economy does not favour one political perspective over another. It is relevant to all economies, be they state or more market-led. Neither is it a replacement for sustainable development. Rather, it is a way of realising that development at the national, regional and global levels and in ways that resonate with and amplify the implementation of Agenda 21.

A transition to a green economy is already underway, a point underscored in the report and a growing wealth of companion studies by international organisations, countries, corporations and civil society. But the challenge is clearly to build on this momentum.

Rio+20 offers a real opportunity to scale-up and embed these "green shoots". In doing so, this report offers not only a roadmap to Rio but beyond 2012, where a far more intelligent management of the natural and human capital of this planet finally shapes the wealth creation and direction of this world.



Achim Steiner

UNEP Executive Director

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