



Seventh “Environment for Europe” Ministerial Conference

**Astana, Kazakhstan
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“Green Bridge” Partnership Programme



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The “Environment for Europe” process: 20 years of pan-European cooperation

Greening the economy: mainstreaming the environment into economic development

“Green Bridge” Partnership Programme*

Note by Kazakhstan

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* This document was not formally edited.

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I. Rationale

1. Back in 1992, 1680 scientists from 70 countries among them 104 Noble Prize winners declared: “Human beings and the natural world are on a collision course. Its ability to provide for growing numbers of people is finite. And we are fast approaching many of the earth's limits”.
2. On the eve of the WSSD in Rio de Janeiro in 2012, the ministers of Asia and the Pacific region stress: “Natural resources are dwindling, and the demand for energy, water and other key natural resources is continuing to grow fast while the basic human needs of millions of people remain unmet. Current economic models heralding the reduction of a natural capital and ecosystem services shall not be further maintained”¹.
3. The UNEP report sees a Green Economy as not only relevant to more developed economies but as a key catalyst for growth and poverty eradication in developing ones too, where in some cases close to 90 per cent of the GDP of the poor is linked to nature or natural capital such as forests and freshwaters².
4. In May 2001 the G8 Group pointed out: “We firmly believe that green growth is an essential element to ensuring sustainable global growth, notably to promote resource efficiency and sound water management, fight climate change and conserve biodiversity, and that it contributes to sustainable development”³. And UN: “We acknowledge that the response to the crisis presents an opportunity to promote green economy initiatives.”⁴
5. Today a fundamental transformation of the existing “brown” economy is far more urgent than in any time in the past. Investments and innovations into a natural capital, renewable energy and environmental efficiency give an opportunity to create the economy of the future that is a green economy providing for new and long-term employment and social development, open for everyone.
6. For the development of a world community, the transition to a green economy which is **“equitable and resilient, providing a better quality of life for all, within the ecological limits of one planet”**⁵ today is a number one priority.
7. At present, concepts of a green economy are widely discussed at all international forums including UN, G8, OECD, BRICS, APEC, and others.

G20 Framework Agreement to secure sustainable and balanced economic growth (12 November 2010), in its article 68 declared: “We recognize that sustainable green growth, as it is inherently a part of sustainable development, is a strategy of quality development, enabling countries to leapfrog old technologies in many sectors, including through the use of energy efficiency and clean technology. To that end, we will take steps to create, as appropriate, the enabling environments that are conducive to the development and deployment of energy efficiency and clean energy technologies, including policies and practices in our countries and beyond, including technical transfer and capacity building”⁶

¹ Documents to the Conference on Environment and Development in Asia and the Pacific, Astana, 2010., http://www.unescap.org/esd/mced6/documents/Documents/MCED6_11E.pdf

² <http://www.unep.org/Documents.Multilingual/Default.asp?DocumentID=659&ArticleID=6902&l=en>

³ Declaration G-8 (May 27, 2011)

⁴ <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N09/399/83/PDF/N0939983.pdf?OpenElement>

⁵ Green Economy Coalition: <http://www.greeneconomycoalition.org>

⁶ http://www.g20.org/Documents2010/11/seoulsummit_declaration.pdf

8. It is obvious that the transition from the brown economy to green will demand a lot of changes and cooperation between the countries, as well as private sector and civil society. The goals of a green economy are consistent with strategic needs of Asia and the Pacific and European regions representing 95 countries and accounting for over 70% of the planet's population and over 90% of all anthropogenic GHG emissions.

9. The Republic of Kazakhstan is located in the heart of Eurasia at the cross of economic, trade and cultural ties. It is the host country of Asian and the Pacific and Pan-European Ministerial Conferences on the Environment and Development. It initiated the networking of these two largest regions to shift towards greener, more competitive and more inclusive development.

10. This Initiative has been duly recognized by countries in those regions as they realized that:

(a) Joint efforts are crucial to protect globally important ecosystems in Asia, the Pacific and Pan-European region, and countries also confirmed that global economy needs fundamental changes which are beyond the capacity of individual countries;

(b) Long-term, stable and multilateral nature of the "Green Bridge" Programme should become the necessary prerequisite for long-term sustainable investments to replace short-term and fragmentary approaches present in many current development efforts and policies;

(c) The "Green Bridge" will facilitate the regional energy and food security and promote the renewal of other green economy sectors given that a developing world rich in natural capital needs new generation of technologies while a vast majority of highly technological products is concentrated in northern countries;

(d) Cross-sectoral and multilateral in nature, the "Green Bridge" Programme, in the context of financial and other shortages, can make a substantial contribution increasing efficiency of existing programmes based on the information exchange, neutral, systemic and professional expertise and recommendations.

11. The countries of Asia, the Pacific and Europe support this Initiative as it creates new opportunities for cooperation and addresses urgent green development needs. Following the decisions adopted by MCED6⁷, ESCAP⁸ and UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy⁹, the Government of Kazakhstan in cooperation with international partners have developed this "Green Bridge" Partnership Programme.

12. The "Green Bridge" Partnership Programme is also viewed as an interregional contribution to the World Summit on Sustainable Development to be held in June 2012 in Rio de Janeiro.

II. Goals and principles of the Programme

13. "Green Bridge" Partnership Programme's goal is to join efforts of the states, international organizations, public and business sectors from Europe, Asia and the Pacific for the transition to a green economy.

14. To achieve this goal, the Programme envisages a continuous implementation of consistent measures to green regional, national policies and key economic sectors and to

⁷ http://www.unescap.org/esd/mced6/documents/Documents/MCED6_13E.pdf

⁸ Resolution at the 67 Commission Session for Asia and the Pacific (2011)

⁹ <http://www.unece.org/env/documents/2011/ece/cep/ece.cep.s.2011.1.5.e.pdf>

facilitate the preparation and implementation of regional and national projects to support a green economy.

15. The Programme shall be built upon the **following principles**:

(a) **The leading role of states** in creating enabling conditions for the transition to a green economy.

(b) **A long-term and multilateral approach** to programmes and projects as the necessary prerequisite for fuelling innovations and investments into a green economy and ecosystem services.

(c) **The stakeholders' engagement.** Industries, private sector, academia, non-governmental organizations and general public should be fully engaged in the Programme development and implementation.

16. **Joint efforts and integration with existing processes.** The Programme will provide for the maximum application of best practices from countries and organizations as well as currently implemented programmes and processes.

17. **Good governance.** Governance should be representative and multinational, professional and transparent, predictable and stable, reported and verified, result-oriented and focused on practical implementation.

III. Keys Areas of the Programme

18. Based on the MCED and ESCAP decisions, the “Green Bridge” Astana Initiative included 5 thematic areas.¹⁰ In consultations with the European partners, these areas were further specified and expanded in this Programme to cover the following:

A. National and international governance strengthening

19. The transition to a green economy requires the involvement of numerous stakeholders, but the key prerequisite is the leading role of national governments in creating management systems and conditions to facilitate innovative activities and a changing attitudes and behavior of business, organizations, households and individuals in favor of the sustainable development.

20. The governments have to:

(a) Create a legal framework to phase out inefficient production and consumption, and to promote eco-efficiency;

(b) Incorporate green procurement and prioritize the channelling of government investments and incentives to sectors that facilitating the greening of energy, industry and agriculture;

(c) Reduce support for spending in the areas that deplete natural capital;

(d) Improve the use of strategic and integrated environmental assessments at the level of national planning;

(e) Apply taxes and market instruments for encouraging a choice of green activities and facilitating green investments and innovations;

¹⁰ http://www.unescap.org/esd/mced6/documents/Documents/MCED6_13E.pdf

(f) Provide support for capacity building and green projects in priority sectors, such as: sustainable energy, agriculture, urban infrastructure and transport, and enhancement of ecosystem services and promotion of sustainable human settlements.

21. In addition, institutional and professional support is much required also **at a regional level**, in order to:

(a) Create long-term sustainable investments into green economy. They should be secured by the multilateral and long-term nature of the Programme preventing sharp turns and steps back in policies and commitments in certain countries or organizations;

(b) Establish a governing body - International Steering Committee and an executive body of the Programme - International Secretariat, selected through the procedure adopted by the international organizations;

(c) Establish a transparent decision-making process, open for everyone providing a basis for trust and involvement of all potential stakeholders, and the civil society in particular.

B. Informational infrastructure of partnership, awareness raising and education

22. The transition to green economy requires joint efforts of all parties. The development of a Programme's common information infrastructure for partnership on the basis of digital technologies, an easily accessible database, internet-TV and multilingual website "Green Bridge", will make a significant contribution to support green economy initiatives in Europe and Asia and the Pacific.

23. The Programme will be able to arrange internet-conferences with famous specialists, political and community leaders, and to engage leading experts in addressing practical tasks.

24. The Programme will support development of information exchange, eco-labelling and sustainable green advertising as tools of the informed consumer society and transparent decision-making process.

25. The transition to green economy will require new educational programmes, staff retraining in various sectors. The "Green Bridge" Programme will use best training and audio-visual materials developed in various countries available for wider use, and support a free access for all target groups, including distant learners.

C. Promotion of green business and green technologies

26. The Programme will be especially focused on the access, distribution and implementation of green technologies and innovations:

(a) The Program will support development of an enabling environment and

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