



Chairpersons Meeting for Environment and Foreign Affairs Committees

The road to Green Growth and sustainable development
May 14-15 2012

Concluding remarks

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our meeting is coming to an end. Before we go to lunch, please, allow me to give a quick summary of the discussions we have had these last two days.

Yesterday and this morning were devoted to the perspectives for the Rio+20 Conference.

Our speakers agreed that the up-coming Rio conference takes place on a very different back drop from 20 years ago. The world today is much more interdependent than in 1992, and economic, social and environmental challenges are intertwined.

The speakers also agreed that the concrete ways to achieve sustainable development were many. (We saw examples of urban planning that were not sustainable). But making growth green is unavoidable given the natural resources available.

The importance of green growth to be inclusive was emphasized. Otherwise green growth will not be sustainable. And to ensure green growth, polluting and consumption must be priced correctly. Emission trading schemes in the EU and Mexico were examples that were mentioned. Facing out fossil fuel subsidies was another example. To help get the price right it was underscored that Rio+20 should end up with the decision to go beyond GDP, and start systematically incorporating natural assets into national accounts. Not least to get finance ministers on board as many of you remarked.



Furthermore, the speakers and many of you agreed that the key players at Rio+20 are different from 20 years ago with much more influence but also responsibility resting with the growing economies in for instance Asia and Latin America.

Hence the role of the EU at Rio+20 is also different. Several of you and some of the speakers mentioned the necessity of Europe speaking with one voice – meaning delivering the same message in as many places as possible – and the need to find new alliance partners. Others mentioned the importance of the EU acting as role model to push forward green growth. While others again raised the question of up-front costs, particularly during the present economic crisis. The Commissioner's response - which was echoed by other speakers - was that nothing leads faster to more jobs in Europe than energy and resource efficiency improvements. Business as usual is just not possible anymore.

Finally, for Rio+20 to be a success, the conference must focus on deliverables. Here access to sustainable energy for all was mentioned as an example.

Today's debate has primarily dealt with resource efficiency and the vision for the EU's 7th environmental action programme.

We heard from a Danish tech company that innovative solutions are out there, but that stronger EU regulation is needed to deal with the water and energy challenges and make sure European companies are first movers in the global market. For instance, the Water Framework Directive is not strong enough to drive water efficiency and thus prevent today's massive water loss and reduce energy use.

We heard about how the high degree of linkages among the resource challenges, underscoring the need for an integrated approach to these. Clever regulation at EU level was discussed, including a move to green public procurement. As was the role of civil society and NGO's. And as an example of a low hanging fruit on the EU level the energy efficiency directive was mentioned again.

We also heard the Danish presidency outlined three wishes for the 7th EAP: 1) better implementation and strengthening of existing policies 2) new policies focused on urban development, biodiversity, chemicals and nano-materials and 3)



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transformation of production and consumption patterns through development of a European Single Market for sustainable growth.

From the European Parliament's Environmental Committee's Jo Leinen we heard that the next EAP should be an overarching and coherent sustainability programme. I hope that the Parliament's resolution on a more coherent road map is what we will come to deal with, and that we will have a vision for 2020 and 2050 that will be clear.

We also heard from McKinsey Research that we are in a new era of resource and circular economy. We heard that we should adapt an integrated approach that strengthen market signals, address market failures and create long term resilience. This also means changing consumer patterns.

Last but not least speakers from today and yesterday emphasized the role of national parliaments and national legislation as very important in securing the public attention on and progression of the green growth agenda. We are all ambassadors of the environment. But it has to be as part of the sustainable development agenda. Remember that the minister asked to mail your good practical examples of what green economy can be to show the world that this debate is not about creating new barriers. This way we can all go to Rio with good examples and as good ambassadors for the environment.