

UNECE contribution to the background document for the 2016 ECOSOC integration segment

UNECE, in cooperation with UNEP, has been working on the preparation of a **pan-European Strategic Framework for greening the economy**, which will be considered for adoption at the **Eight Environment for Europe Ministerial Conference in Batumi on 8-10 June 2016**. The aim of the Strategic Framework is to guide the region in its transition to an inclusive green economy by 2030. This will require enhanced cooperation among and within countries, as policy measures deliver better results if implemented in a clear, predictable and coordinated manner where multiple interdependencies are taken into account.

The Strategic Framework is expected to serve environment ministers in initiating and sustaining discussions on the green economy transition in their national Governments and, ultimately, in creating an interministerial policy process to bring forward such an agenda that involves key constituencies, including the public at large and the private sector.

Three main objectives are being pursued: reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities; enhancing economic progress and improving human well-being and social equity. The objectives collectively foster prosperity, through economic progress that is environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive. The preservation of natural capital, ecosystems and their services would improve the quality of life and contribute to a shared prosperity, while the reduced environmental stress would decrease human health risks and increase well-being.

Under the Strategic Framework, a voluntary initiative (the “Batumi Initiative on Green Economy” (BIG-E)) is proposed to support the implementation of the Framework during 2016–2030. The initiative will comprise voluntary commitments by interested countries and organizations, both public and private, in the form of green economy actions.

Greening the economy, as an approach to foster economic progress while ensuring environmental sustainability and social equity, can support the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The links between the Framework’s objectives, focus areas and committed actions by the BIG-E stakeholders on the one hand, and the SDGs and their targets, on the other, provide countries with a clearer picture of possible avenues to advance the green transition while at the same time making progress on the aspects of the 2030 Agenda relevant to their development priorities.

UNECE has carried out an **assessment of the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in the framework of the Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses**. This assessment aims to promote transboundary cooperation by identifying intersectoral synergies that could be further explored and utilized, and to determine policy measures and actions that could alleviate tensions or conflicts related to the multiple uses of and needs for common resources.

Coordination between the water, energy, food and environment sectors is challenging even at the national level. But the complexity increases substantially in transboundary river basins where the impacts spread from one country to another and trade-offs and externalities may cause friction between the riparian countries. The “nexus approach” to managing interlinked resources provides a way to enhance water, energy and food security by increasing efficiency, reducing trade-offs, building synergies and improving governance, while protecting ecosystems.

Despite the increasing recognition of the importance of interlinkages and dependencies between sectors, practical work on the nexus approach remains very rare. UNECE is exploring new ground by applying a systematic approach to determine what is entailed in the water-food-energy-ecosystems nexus in transboundary basins. On the basis of a practically-oriented and participatory assessment, the evidence shows the tangible benefits of intersectoral coordination and transboundary cooperation. The results underline the significance of intersectoral issues and the scale of the challenges. With the projected growth in needs, ensuring food and energy security without overexploiting water resources and compromising the integrity of ecosystems, will require cooperation and integrated planning that goes beyond managing separate sectors. The nexus assessment shows that, with transboundary cooperation, it is possible to achieve the sustainable management of water resources and, at the same time, increase the share of renewable energy sources and raise agricultural productivity.

UNECE is working to **improve the energy performance of residential buildings**, which contributes to reducing fuel poverty and mitigating greenhouse gas emissions, while creating employment. Hence, energy efficiency measures can deliver economic, social and environmental benefits. UNECE is seeking to develop energy-efficiency standards in buildings through cross-divisional activities, including the creation of a Joint Task Force that brings together experts from various intergovernmental groups working on housing, energy and standards and is open to other stakeholders. The aim is to map existing standards and technologies as a basis for the development of future standards,