

Resolution on developing a common EU position ahead of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20)

2011/2733(RSP) - 29/09/2011 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

Following the debate which took place during the sitting of 28 September 2011, the European Parliament adopted by 449 votes to 103 with 45 abstentions a resolution tabled on behalf of the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety on developing a common EU position ahead of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) to be held in Rio de Janeiro in June 2012. Noting that the Conference will focus on two themes: ‘a green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication’ and ‘the institutional framework for sustainable development’, Parliament wants to ensure that a **strong and unified EU position** is submitted to the UN before 1 November 2011.

Members note that although progress towards sustainable development has been made since the Rio Summit in 1992 and the Johannesburg Summit in 2002, **considerable implementation gaps remain**, while many commitments by the international community have not yet been met. Parliament calls on the Commission and the Council to ensure that the Rio+20 Summit does not only result in statements of good will, but in **tangible actions and accountable targets and ways of measuring them**. It insists that a **‘green economy’** be understood as the entire economy functioning within the limits of sustainability in respect to biodiversity, maintaining ecosystem services, climate protection and use of natural resources. More focus should be given to human, environmental and natural capital and sustainable development is more than just green economy

Parliament calls for a **Green Economy Roadmap** to be adopted in this respect. It also underlines that a green economy must be focused on decoupling economic activity from resource use and environmental degradation.

Actions in resources and natural capital: Members reiterate that the concept of a ‘green economy’ advocated by the Commission will not automatically bring prosperity for the poor and achieve the MDGs unless economies are properly managed, natural capital equitably governed and access to distribution equally guaranteed for present and future generations. They underline the importance of **assessing resources, natural capital and ecosystem services at their real value** and call for the establishment of natural capital accounting processes and their integration into economic accounting structures and political decision-making processes.

Water: the resolution emphasises that the Rio+20 Summit needs to renew its commitment towards promoting the sustainable management of water as a public good, and it calls for special protection for water as an element particularly vulnerable to the effects of climate change. It asks the Rio + 20 summit to ensure that the human right to water and sanitation is globally achieved.

Marine environment and oceans: Parliament considers that seas and oceans should become one of the key pillars of the Rio Framework, alongside climate and biodiversity protection. It invites the Rio+20 Summit to **launch negotiations in order to adopt international legal instruments** for: (i) the control of land-based pollution of seas; (ii) sustainable management of human activities in areas beyond national jurisdiction; and (iii) the conservation of marine biodiversity and introduction and recognition of marine protected areas in international waters.

Energy: Parliament underlines that the transition towards a green economy requires a **radical transformation of the energy sector in order to promote renewable energy and energy efficiency** and also universal access to energy also for the poor and to foster electrification, especially in least developed countries. It calls for **global targets and measures** to increase the use of renewable energy and energy efficiency worldwide. Members warn against any offshore oil exploration and extraction operations in environmentally fragile areas like the Arctic zone and **oppose oil extraction from tar sands and oil shale**. With regard to the Fukushima catastrophe, they recall the absolute necessity of ensuring the highest level of nuclear safety within the EU and of promoting these requirements at international level.

Agriculture and food security: Members call for coordinated action against the man-made root causes of hunger and for guaranteed food sovereignty for developing countries. They stress the following:

- the need to promote small-scale agriculture in the context of poverty eradication;
- the need for global measures to create greater transparency in the commodity market and to stop financial speculation that contributes to high food price volatility and subsequent global food crises;
- the need to arrest the global trends in large-scale land acquisition by foreign entities in developing countries, in order to ensure food security and protect the rights of indigenous communities;
- the vital importance of securing the property rights of small producers and family farms, which are responsible for the majority of the world's food supply.

Forests: Parliament considers that the Rio+20 Summit should have as a goal to ensure participative forest governance, equitable benefit-sharing and the conservation and sustainable use of forests globally. It expresses its concern concerning the new Forest Code to be adopted by the Brazilian Senate, which will exacerbate deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon, and urges the host nation Brazil to make a clear commitment to protect the Amazon forest. The Commission is asked to make available in time for the Rio+20 Summit **a study assessing the impact of EU consumption of food and non-food products on deforestation**, and Parliament calls for the study to also assess the impacts of existing EU policies and legislation on deforestation and outline new policy initiatives to address the identified impacts.

Environmentally harmful subsidies: Members stress the urgent need to tackle such subsidies and to develop and implement positive incentives for benefiting from, and conservation of, biodiversity. They call on the Rio+20 Summit to launch a series of coordinated actions by countries aimed at phasing out all environmentally harmful subsidies by 2020.

Regulatory and market-based instruments: Parliament highlights in this context the urgency of addressing the **climate impact of international shipping and aviation**. It calls for a **tax on financial transactions** to be established at international level. It also underlines that fiscal reforms designed to **shift the tax burden from labour to resource use and pollution** can help create a win-win outcome for both employment and the environment.

Financing: the resolution emphasises that the transition towards a global green economy will require **large-scale financial investment**. Public money alone will not be enough, and public funding will have to leverage much greater private investment. Parliament stresses the need to promote new technologies by also improving access to finance. It invites the Rio+20 Summit to recommend reform of existing financing strategies and to establish new public-private financing schemes and partnerships as needed.

Empowering citizens: Members considers it of the utmost importance to continue to empower citizens in environmental governance and call for progress in Rio+20 on ensuring the effective global implementation of Rio Principle 10. They feel that the EU has important experience to offer in international discussions with over 10 years of implementation of the Aarhus Convention.

Technologies: the resolution acknowledges that technological innovation and transfer is essential to meet challenges, but underlines that technological development cannot be the only solution to environmental

problems or for poverty eradication. It supports the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building and asks for the **creation of capacity within the UN system to provide information** about new technologies to integrate a broader concept of sustainability and promote sustainable development of products and processes in all areas.

Measuring progress: Members call for urgent studies to **develop a new set of metrics** to measure progress towards equity and sustainable development. The Rio+20 Summit should deliver an alternative model to measure growth and welfare 'beyond GDP', and Parliament calls for the adoption of clear and measurable indicators that take account of climate change, biodiversity, resource efficiency and social inclusion.

Improve governance: lastly, Parliament makes a series of recommendations on improving sustainable development governance, and also reiterates its proposal for an international environmental court so that global environmental legislation becomes more binding and enforceable, or at least an international authority, such as an ombudsman with mediation powers.