

**ECONOMY:
It Pays to Go Green**

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UNITED NATIONS, Sep 25 (IPS) - A new report shows how a greener economy could eradicate poverty by creating tens of millions of new jobs. But it will not happen solely through the market's "magic hand".

"We are sending signals that low-carbon, energy-efficient and less polluting technologies and production processes will be the winners in the new emerging economy," Achim Steiner, head of the U.N. Environment Programme (UNEP), told IPS.

Together with the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), UNEP released a new report entitled "Green Jobs: Towards Decent Work in a Sustainable, Low-Carbon World".

It shows the possible impact a emerging "green economy" will have on the world of work. According to the report, "investments resulting from efforts to reduce climate change and its effects are already generating new jobs".

In Germany, for example, the number of jobs in the renewable energy sector rose from 66,600 in 1998 to 259,100 in 2006.

In the same year, the sector had more than 2.3 million employees worldwide -- many of them in developing countries like China and Brazil. The report estimates that employment in the renewable energy sector will surpass 20 million people in 2030.

Other sectors with a promising green job potential -- in developed and developing countries alike -- are recycling, public transportation, improving energy efficiency of buildings, small-scale sustainable farming and sustainable forestry management.

By 2030, the volume of the market for environmental products and services is predicted to reach 2.740 trillion dollars per year, from 1.3 trillion at present.

But the report has some bad news as well. The number of new, well-paid jobs for poor people in developing countries is still far from adequate.

With 1.3 billion working people - or 43 percent of the global workforce -- earning too little to lift them and their families out of the poverty threshold of two dollars per person and day, immediate action is required, experts say.

The current pace of economic transition "is absolutely not fast enough" to tackle the challenges of climate change and to substantially reduce unemployment and poverty, Steiner said.

"It requires governments to take their responsibilities, to invest and to plan," ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder told IPS. Sustainable development will require more cooperation between governments, employers and trade unions.

However, as the economy changes in a way that creates new jobs, many already existing workplaces will also change -- meaning the environmental impact of enterprises and economic sectors will be reduced, ultimately to sustainable levels -- and other jobs will be lost.

"You can have greener workplaces in any industry," Ronnie Goldberg, vice president of the International Organisation of Employers, told IPS. "But some industries eventually may disappear or certainly become much smaller."

For this reason, the International Trade Union Confederation calls for "just transitions" as Ryder said: "It means transition with protection for displaced workers, which provides alternatives for them -- like retraining and new investment -- so they can move with a minimum of suffering from where they are today towards new opportunities."

The director-general of the ILO, Juan Somavia, stressed that "green jobs are not decent by definition". Especially in industries like waste management, many jobs are dirty, dangerous and difficult.

As natural resources grow scarce and expensive, many new business ideas are born -- for example the recycling of mobile phones. Unheard-of in the past millennium, it has emerged to a multi-million-dollar business in recent years.

"Consumers' demand for pro-environmental goods and services is exponentially increasing," Tim Augustin, PR and marketing manager of the firm Greener Solutions in Germany, told IPS. With branches in Britain and Germany, it focuses on the recycling and trading of mobile phones.

"In 2007, Greener Solutions Germany collected around 450,000 mobile phones -- a growth of 175 per cent compared with 2006," Augustin said. An estimated 100 million mobile phones are replaced every year in Europe alone.

Examples like this make Achim Steiner feel optimistic. "When you look 30, 50 years down the line, we will be producing the same quantity of goods with far less input and far less waste coming out of it. The waste from one production process becomes the input for another."

(END/2008)