



**CEEweb for Biodiversity**  
Széher út 40. 1021 Budapest, Hungary  
Phone: +36 1 398 0135  
Fax: +36 1 398 0136  
ceeweb@ceeweb.org  
www.ceeweb.org

## Towards Green Economy: greenwashing or sustainability?

While it is a common objective of nations to ensure and increase human wellbeing for all on the principle of equitability, there are several symptoms today, which warn us that we need radical changes in the development patterns on global level. Some of the most alarming trends are:

- About **60% (15 out of 24) of the ecosystem services** examined during the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (2005) are being **degraded or used unsustainably**, including fresh water, capture fisheries, air and water purification, and the regulation of regional and local climate, natural hazards, and pests.
- Today humanity **uses** the equivalent of **1.5 planets** to provide the resources we use and absorb our waste, and high income countries have 30 times higher ecological deficit than low income countries. This ecological overshoot also contributes to resource conflicts and wars, mass migrations, famine, disease and other human tragedies – and tends to have a disproportionate impact on the poor (Global Footprint Network, 2010)
- Approximately **925 million people are undernourished** globally (FAO, 2010).
- Over **three billion people live on less than \$2.50 a day** (World Bank Development Indicators, 2008). The poorest 40 percent of the world's population accounts for 5 percent of global income, while the richest 20 percent accounts for three-quarters of world income.
- The global unemployment rate stood at 6.2 per cent and the global youth unemployment rate at 12.6 per cent in 2010. Besides about **half of the workers had vulnerable or insecure jobs** (ILO, 2011).

These symptoms show us that we manage our common goods (natural resources and land) in an unsustainable way and that we cannot share the benefits arising from these resources equitably at national and global levels. Even though these problems have been apparent for many decades, our responses failed to tackle the problems within the current socio-economic framework. Just on the contrary: we see worsening trends both in social and environmental terms. This is the failure of our economic, social and environmental policies, but we cannot solve these problems separately as past efforts have shown.

We are convinced that without a paradigm change in the economy human wellbeing cannot improve for all people. We need to change the boundary conditions of the economy so that all human activities stay within the carrying capacity of the Earth. If the carrying capacity is exceeded, we are accumulating ecological debt with many-decade-long pay back period. For this end we need to **limit and reduce the use of natural resources**, as well as ensure the **sustainable use of ecosystems** on global level. We need to introduce an incentive system, which ensures **the access to and benefit from resources for the poor, while reduces the excessive natural resource use** by others at the same time on global and national levels. Only with these measures we can tackle the environmental problems, such as climate change and biodiversity loss, and the social problems of hunger and poverty effectively.

The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012 will be a historic moment to achieve a paradigm change on global level, where the commitment of all nations is needed.

We cannot delay the necessary and well-thought out responses today, otherwise the late responses tomorrow in an even more divided world and degraded planet will prove unnecessarily painful!

**CEEweb for Biodiversity is a network of non-governmental organizations in the Central and Eastern European region. Our mission is the conservation of biodiversity through the promotion of sustainable development.**