

Topic A: "Eradicating Poverty through an Inclusive Green Economy"

INTRODUCTION

The eradication of poverty has long been a priority for world leaders and international organisations in the United Nations. To understand what it means to be in poverty, it must be approached as a multifaceted concept. For the United Nations Environmental Programme, poverty equals the deprivation of social, economic, and environmental related services, amenities, and resources (UNEP, 2015). Poverty is agreed by academics that it is a complex definition, it is classified in a variety of ways for administrative purposes, for aid purposes, for data collection purposes, and so on. It is a challenge though, a global challenge that has been addressed in a variety of ways through a diverse range of platforms. It is a challenge not just for developing nations but developed ones as well.

There has been successes but it has not been the picture perfect success we imagine, because even though the first Millennium Development Goal of Eradicating Extreme Poverty and Hunger by 2015 met its target of reducing extreme poverty rates by half. It does not mean those who are not living under \$1.25/per day are in any better position than they were before, they could still be classified as living in poverty in their situation (Way, 2015: 4). For this reason, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has kept its first goal to end poverty in all its forms everywhere. It is an ambitious goal with multiple targets, but the aim is to ensure a step by step process of moving people out of the globally defined standard of extreme poverty (UN General Assembly A/RES/70/1). Then ensuring they move out of poverty in all its dimensions within the poverty defined context of their nations.

With that, they will continue with ensuring all nations have a safety net in place to support the development and growth of those who are considered in poverty, to provide them the foundation to improve their social and economic situation. Furthermore, ensure equal access to resources that will support their development and help them move out of poverty. This leads to how it can be done as within the United Nations Environmental Programme, there has been an increased push for the Green Economy. An inclusive, viable, sustainable, and robust economic system that will allow the empowerment, development, and thriving justice of all people to enjoy resources and services without deprivation (UNEP, 2011: 16).

This form of an economy, is meant to implement the factors and institutions that will support society to interconnect environmental needs and economic benefits without depriving any one individual or group from enjoying life. Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication was one of the two themes of the *Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development*, and it has since been seen as a "means for catalysing renewed national policy development and international cooperation and support for sustainable development (Rio+20, 2012)." However, the lack of an internationally agreed-upon definition have prevented the effective promotion of the green economy.

It goes without saying that this does not mean the Green Economy is not an idea worth pursuing, it is not change for the sake of change. The Green Economy has many supporters and is something the global community to strive to implement, but it has to be done carefully. The current setbacks are that any goals or proposals do not cater to the specific situations of each nation, especially the factors and institutional systems that allow poverty to occur in the first place. The problem of poverty is a complex one and if one does not resolve the root of the issue, any solution will be fruitless in eradicating poverty. Among academics, research has shown that the process of "greening the economy" will result in increases in GDP and GDP per capita through 2050 (UNEP, 2011: 16). What is more, most of the fast paced

economic growth that will enable the eradication process of poverty will not be at the expense of the environment i.e. resource usage, land degradation, water and air pollution.

Finally, an interagency statement from the United Nations released before the *2009 UNFCCC* in Copenhagen called the move to a green economy as a transformation to address multiple crises, particularly in the context of the 2008 financial crisis (WTO, 2009). This transition will require both behavioural and policy changes to ensure the added social benefits of clean and sustainable growth are evenly distributed. The UNEP has been working towards this goal, in particular through its *Green Economy Initiative*. Launched in 2008 aimed to provide “analysis and policy support for investment in green sectors and for greening resource- and/or pollution-intensive sectors” (UNEP, 2008). It has since commissioned a host of reports and scientific studies in partnership with civil society and development agents such as the World Bank.

Therefore, poverty reduction is inextricably linked to the move towards a low-carbon, resource-efficient, and socially inclusive green economy. This study guide will present to you the basis for what you will need to know but it is not an all-inclusive document of poverty eradication through a green economy. This guide is meant to aid you in your research, supply you with a foundation to begin your understanding of your country’s position on the green economy. We hope you will find this study guide informative and useful as you write your position papers.

Best of luck!

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DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

Green Economy: An economy that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities.

Green Growth: is often cited as an overlapping concept with green economy with having sustainable development as their ultimate objective and being a means to reconcile the economic and environmental pillars, without ignoring social aspects. It is often seen as a bottom up approach to sustainable economic development.

Absolute Poverty: impossibility to meet basic needs

Relative Poverty: a situation in which income in consumption fall below a certain threshold established in relation to a country's income or consumption distribution

Poverty lines: would then be cut-off points that separate those who live in poverty from those who don't. The extreme poverty line currently stands at \$1.25.

Economic deprivation should be addressed in a policy that aims to eradicate poverty through a green economy:

Social deprivation, which occurs when there is inadequate access to social amenities like education, health, sanitation, water, shelter and security

Environmental deprivation, which manifests itself as restricted access to natural assets, as well as differential vulnerability to climate change, ecosystem degradation and pollution.

Natural resource decoupling - using less resources per unit of economic output

Impact decoupling - reducing the environmental impact of any resources that are used or economic activities that are undertaken, while increasing economic output

Natural Resources: Products of the natural environment that are of direct economic use for human consumption and economic production, they can be quantified in economic terms and extracted irrespective of their intrinsic value (location) or situational value (location in relation to human habitats or settlements)

Environmental Resources: Products of the natural environment that have intrinsic value and potential for long term sustainable usage without depletion and minimal destruction the environment it lies within

*** This is not an exhaustive list of key terms, only a brief highlight, please utilize this document for further key terms and valuable definitions to be aware of in the debate as poverty is a complex issue and the green economy is a broad topic in itself, looking into the referenced document will be nothing but beneficial to you in your research and personal development of knowledge in both these topics*

Please familiarise yourself with the definitions within this document:

http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/Portals/50244/documents/IRP_Draft_Glossary.pdf

Challenges of Today and Tomorrow

Ranging from self-centred agendas of ensuring long-term market dominance and maximised profits while realising growth potential. Then to seemingly altruistic claims for just and optimised allocation of resources and long-term economic, political and environmental stability. The tripartite entity of business decision-makers, political leaders and scholars is more and more influenced by societal concerns.

While it remains relatively unchallenged that in order to meet future requirements to supply the rapidly growing world population with primary care such as food, water and medical care. With answering the calls of an exploding middle class in former developing countries for luxury items and a higher standard of living. The industry, production, service providers and supply chains need to grow accordingly.

How to do so in a manner that allows for continuous growth for future generations without simultaneously destroying our natural and cultivated habitat, however, causes way more controversy amongst experts of all fields. Nonetheless, the contrast of ecological conscience versus economic interests is only at first glance one of incompatible dichotomy. The synergy effects of problem-solving endeavours taking into account bilateral and multilateral interdependencies and consequential cohesion between sustainable resource management, innovation and long-term profit are multifarious.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity (United Nations, A/RES/70/1, 2015). To reach the goal of eradicating poverty, a prerequisite for sustainable growth, several significant barriers have to be overcome. A major contributor to poverty for a vast majority of people is the level of inequality in terms of economic standard, health care, access to clean water, sufficient nutrition and general living standard. As for global wealth concentration, the richest 1 per cent of the world's population now control close to 50 per cent of global assets, while the poorest half owns just 1 per cent (Sabha, 2015). These inequalities are inadvertently sustained by the prevailing economic model of free markets.

Environmental risks in the form of natural hazards and increasing extreme events in relation with climate change, combined with fresh water, clean air and fertile land becoming scarcer, threaten human well-being across the globe. To allow for change towards equality, people need access to jobs with a life-sustaining income. However globalisation combined with the 3rd and 4th industrial revolution lead to the loss of jobs, especially in manufacturing.

Financial investments, both public and private can have strong impact on different economies. They can influence sectors to thrive and steer behaviour in more sustainable directions (i.e. supporting the development of renewable energies or more efficient technical devices). Although, investment horizons have to overcome the common time span of a couple of years but take into account long-term benefits – and risks.

A revolutionised economic system will go beyond being competitive and assuring growth and wealth for few, but will address environment, social justice and inclusiveness. The challenges to overcome when designing an inclusive green economy demand skills, technology and knowledge and require information, capacity and financing to be implemented. The economic redesign has to be comprehensive and holistic, to move the world to an inclusive green economy that enables human well-being (Sabha, 2015).

A Guideline to the Green Economy

For the UNEP's Green Economy Initiative, a working definition of a green economy has been as established as follows:

"[A green economy is] one that results in improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities. In its simplest expression, a green economy can be thought of as one which is low carbon, resource efficient and socially inclusive. (UNEP, 2011: 16)"

Practically speaking, a green economy is one whose growth in income and employment is driven by public and private investments. However, it also reduces carbon emissions and pollution, enhances energy and resource efficiency, and prevents biodiversity loss and ecosystem services degradation. These investments need to be catalysed and supported by targeted public expenditure, policy reforms and regulation changes. This development path should maintain, enhance and, where necessary, rebuild natural capital as a critical economic asset and source of public benefits, especially for poor people whose livelihoods and security depend strongly on nature (UNEP, 2011: 16).

A definition of a concept like an inclusive green economy can fuel debates and resolutions on how to eradicate poverty, but in the end, what will bring change about is how abstract concepts are implemented. The operationalization of an abstract idea like an inclusive green economy has different dimensions.

1. Economic policies will shape the transition from a market based and profit oriented economy towards a green economy. They will guide companies, representatives of the public sector and also consumers and individual citizens to ease the change towards a green sustainable economy.
2. Environmental policies will foster environmental preservation and force economic leaders to adapt to an environmentally friendly way of making business. To achieve an integration of economic and environmental policies, the economic value of nature and natural goods has to be assessed in economic planning, and environmental externalities have to be incorporated.
3. While policies guide the behaviour of politicians, businesses and large-scale organisations, the world is the result of 7.3 billion people's individual choices. While a larger framework of political and economic decisions will guide people's choices, focus has also to be laid on behavioural changes of consumers, decision makers, and

individual citizens. Such ways have to be clever, cost-effective and engaging people, independent of their economic or social background.

Now it is important to highlight that within us all, we strive for growth and improvement, strive to survive and find the means to survive. In the context of this topic, one of the strands of the debate internationally has been to decouple economic development from environmental deterioration. Technological and systematic innovation as well as behavioural changes have reduced the natural resource usage from the economic output. Figure 1.1 visualises the vision of increasing human well-being and economic activity with reduced environmental impact (Fischer-Kowalski, et al., 2011: 4)

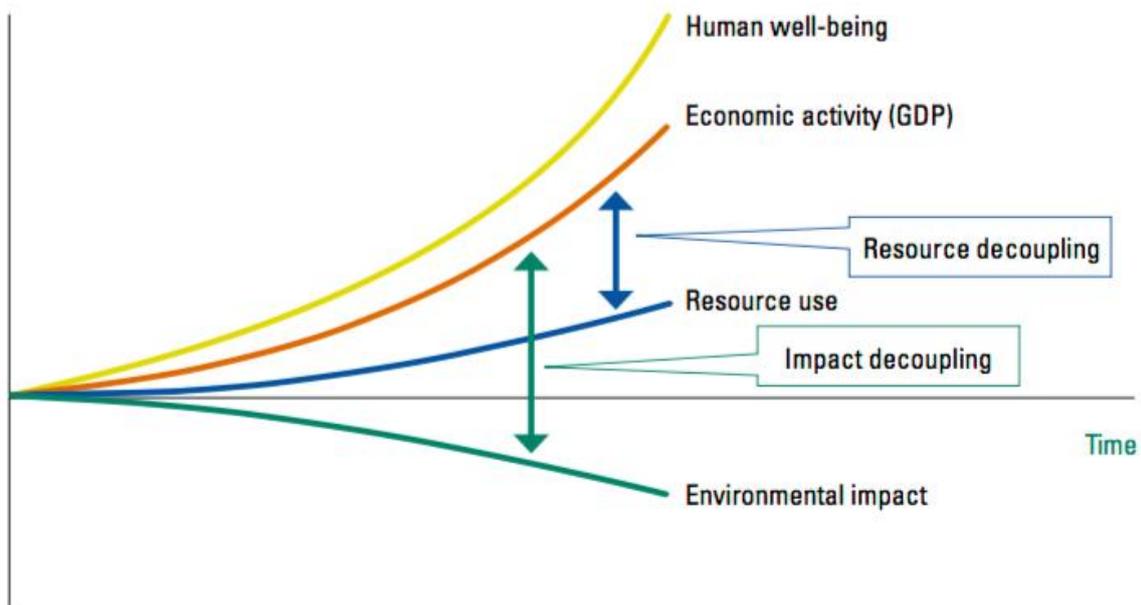


Fig. 1.1: Two aspects of 'decoupling'

Whereas coupling refers to the “economic concept of uncompensated environmental effects of production and consumption that affect consumer utility and enterprise costs outside the market system” (UN, 1997). Traditionally, the economic effects on so called common goods like clean air or unpolluted rivers are neglected, as they are not immediate, easily measurable and therefore quantifiable. However these lacking economic incentives to equitably allocate public goods on the market lead to inefficient markets and greater segregation. An inclusive green economy is comprehensive in a sense that it includes economic prosperity, societal justice as well as environmental protection.

According to scholars continuous economic growth is the only sustainable way to reduce poverty, inequality and ultimately the factors that can lead to potential conflict or periods of tension (Howarth, 2012). This provokes the question whether money can buy us happiness after all. Well, it may not, but a certain standard of economic independence can surely facilitate the pursuit of a dignified life. One crucial issue to be discussed in that regard is importance of refugee issues and our incompetence to face it. By the end of 2014 there were reported numbers of more than 51.2 million people who have either been forcibly displaced

for reasons of political or religious persecution or were fleeing their home countries for socioeconomic reasons (UNHRC, 2014).

Especially the latter is mainly driven by the post-colonial state of the North-South paradoxon and its equivalent tendencies due to the globalisation, with people in the developing world hoping for a better life in the golden West of economic welfare, human well-being and endless opportunities for improvement. The only solution to this might be to discourage unrealistic ideas and simultaneously foster enhanced conditions in countries of origin, especially as the situation is likely to escalate in the near future, due to the consequences of climate change such as rising sea levels, desertification and natural hazards. Sustainable growth is hereby one of the if not the ultimate driving factor as incentivised business endeavours are inherently triggering economic upheaval, which will then lead to a higher standard of living for a broader population (Howarth, 2012).

In his book “The Ultimate Resource” from 1981 and his revision thereof in 1996, Julian Lincoln Simon questioned the mere existence of a resource crisis and the overarching fear of humanity running out of natural resources, even making bets with other scholars to prove it. He argues that, as particular resources become more scarce, prices rise accordingly and thus create momentum in incentivising people to tackle shortages and investigate substitutes. Measuring scarcity in relation to prices in wage adjusted terms to eliminate inflation and link the worth of human labour to its equivalent value in particular resource stocks, he argues that relative scarcity is preferable to abundance as it serves as an incentive for people to bolster sustainable usage such as storage, new extraction techniques or recycling and the development of alternative methods of survival. Being pushed out of their comfort zone reinforces human behaviour and survival strategies in their pursuit to develop and improve, and the “ultimate resource” is thus the human capacity to invent, adapt and innovate, in short: human progress itself (Simon, 1996).

This goes very much in line with the conclusion that economic growth while being desirable and inevitable needs to change to become more sustainable and thus become more intellectual than material growth (Hepburn, 2012). As knowledge is power, investment needs to be shifted from the material economy to the intellectual economy to foster innovation. As human mankind is both cause and solution to most of our contemporary challenges and issues, humanity and human progress are the only key we've got to open the door to a safer, fairer and more sustainable future.

Despite his fairly optimistic view on humanity's future prospects, even Simon couldn't help but notice the “perils of overpopulation” and overconsumption stipulating all related aspects such as increased volume of traffic, unemployment, shortage of living space and severe issues with the supply of drinking water, food and energy. These tendencies are particularly grave in metropolitan areas, with on-going urbanization resulting in growing demands in “Megacities” with more than 10 million inhabitants such as Mumbai, Tokyo, Cairo or New York City. Meeting the requirements of these enormous masses in a sustainable way is potentially difficult as not only primary needs have to be satisfied in appropriate speed, but as well as an exponentially quickly growing middle class in former developing countries such

as India is very eager to invest in a particular standard of living with the income gap from the poorest to the very rich keeps getting bigger and bigger at the same time (UN, 2006).

The industrialization of the developing world and the intensifying prospects of industrialised nations to outsource both production and responsibility for emissions and working conditions, foster production and consumption such as pollution, deforestation, congestion and exploitation of resources. Finding a sustainable long-term balance of economic growth that does not excessively lead to inflation or deflation will continue to be utterly challenging to manage.

In the light of growing debts and the aftermath or rather ongoing tragedy of the financial crisis, the sustainability of the growth of multinational corporations, banks, .com enterprises etc. has come under critical scrutiny as well. The phenomenon of short-term bubbles in particular fields, reaffirmed and accelerated by speculative endeavours, is in its core diametrically opposed to the idea of long-term sustainable growth. Thus, focus needs to be shifted from making investments profitable that capitalise on virtual realities of assets without real-world equivalent towards incentivising responsible decision-making and hereby making responsible leadership desirable under economic contemplation and not only soothing the conscience of do-gooders and philanthropists.

While some exponential economists dream of infinite growth, more finite-minded critics argue that there is a natural limit to how far can grow - and how fast and by which means. For instance, since the 1650s, our energy consumption has steadily increased, with an annual growth rate of about 3% in the US and some argue that this growth rate will persist (Murphy, 2011). It indeed persisted even though many pieces of technology that have been developed grew more and more energy efficient over time. Consider the case of your sleek and elegant washing machine, which probably sports a quadruple-A energy efficiency rating and uses what feel like around as much energy as a small desk lamp, and compare this washing machine with the energy-devouring and water-slurping monstrosity your grandmother used in her household after WWII. Despite the growing efficiency in energy use, we continue to use more and more energy-dependent technology overall, as egg cookers become their own devices, game consoles sweeten a day off and microwaves conveniently reheat your morning coffee letting our energy consumption continue to grow (Handwerk, 2013).

What is the problem, you may ask. Clearly, you have realized that fossil fuels are a finite resource and will at some point run out, but then there is still the unlimited energy of the sun, wind, and water that we can use to power our washing machines, microwaves and egg cookers. Despite the great temptation of relying on renewable energy, we often forget Achilles's heel when it comes to switching to renewable energy. First up, before you can use renewable energy, you need invest currently available fuels into producing the hardware necessary to harvest renewable energy, from wind wheels to water turbines and solar panels, ultimately shortening the resources in fossil fuels we have available. At the same time, renewable energy has an unfortunate drawback compared to more traditional energy sources: low energy returned on energy invested (EROEI) rates, making renewable energy sources a relatively unattractive investment (Murphy, 2011).

Taken together, if we wanted to cut back on fossil fuels, and invest heavily (because of their low EROEI rates) into renewable energy, we run into the problem of reducing the energy available on the market for other endeavors. However, as our hunger for energy is ever-growing, even a stagnation of energy availabilities could send our economy into a steep decline. To get ourselves powered by renewable energy, a careful assessment of today's energy household with big investments today is necessary to build a sustainable energy consumption strategy for tomorrow. Research implies that we are no longer fashionably late to change our energy consumption behaviour, but rather way beyond reasonable doubt.

Even if you do not buy the idea that we need to get going on *Energiewende* sooner rather than later, simple physics further illuminate the idea that “energy galore” is not the best motto for continued growth. If we consider the case of economic growth based on growing energy consumption from an angle of thermodynamics, continued growth will - ultimately - boil earth. (Murphy, 2012). Physics knows that when energy is “used”, there is often waste heat emitted as infrared radiation. The problems with this waste heat is that it steadily heats up the surface temperature of the planet - leading to estimates of “boiling temperatures” to be reached in 400 years, given a further growth rate in energy consumption of 2.3%.

Energy is admittedly not the only facet of resources we should be concerned about. Consider the supply of clean drinking water, unpolluted breathable air, nutrient-rich soils and the availability of minerals. Beyond worrying about the basic resources we need to survive, another facet of concern relates to the habitat available to the world population. How much space does a human being need to survive, and to live a good life? How can we prevent diseases from spreading in overpopulated areas, stop crime and support public safety?

Growth seems to be an intricate game, with rules that are difficult to understand. An attempt at stimulating growth based on a reduced model considering only five variables (world population, industrialization, pollution, food production, and resource depletion) paints an appropriately dim picture. Two out of the simulated scenarios saw the world collapse by the mid-21st century (Bardi, 2011). A sustainable growth scenario, according to this simulation, requires a reduction of the human ecological footprint, and a trade-off between the number of people inhabiting earth and the living standard of each person that can sustainably be ensured. At the same time, the simulation shows that an earlier onset of reforms to reach sustainability increase the prospects of the world population for a relatively higher quality of living compared to late-onset reforms (Bardi, 2011).

A final reason to advocate early-on reforms to reach sustainable growth is the Seneca effect: *"increases are of sluggish growth, but the way to ruin is rapid"* (Bardi, 2011).

BLOC POSITIONS

When we begin debate, normally delegates will start to discuss potential ideas and solutions for a draft resolution within their respective blocs before collaborating with other blocs to create a draft resolution consensus. For this debate, here are the following blocs you may place yourselves into, as there are 70 of you in this debate, I will simply list the regional/alliance group name and it will be up to you when you research your respective countries to figure out which bloc you are a part of for the debate.

You may work within your blocs, but if your country is not explicitly part of a bloc then look for whether you have an allies who are a part of these blocs and work with them during the course of the debate. Again, it goes without reminding that this is a helpful aid for your research, you have to take responsibility to understand who your country that you are representing normally allies with in these issues or at least share common concerns related to the topics.

The blocs have refrained from naming specific countries as not all countries would be associated with a bloc, your own research will allow you to understand which bloc your country will be most associated with in the debate. This is also not an exhaustive list of blocs/alliances that may form within the debate, so within your research, we advise to jot down not just government related alliances but NGO related ones too as well as economic/business ones.

Arab Forum for Environment and Development (AFED) is made of governments, corporations, regional and international organisations, researchers, and media representatives from 48 countries. They hold an annual conference where their most recent one was recently held in Beirut from 16-17 November to primarily discuss green finance and how it can drive sustainable consumption and production in the Arab region.

The Partnership for Action on Green Economy (PAGE) is a partnership to support 20 countries in their development towards a green economy. This is done in an alliance with multiple member-states who act as funding partners and cooperative initiatives between multiple UN agencies and UNEP to assist in the developing countries policy and infrastructure development for creating a green economy.

European Union Bloc (EU)

Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa (BRICS)

The Pacific Alliance is a Latin American bloc that has started to frame the cooperation between Latin American states on how to green their economies.

Climate Change and Development in Africa (CCDA) hold an annual conference with policy makers and civil organisations for greening the African economies.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations Economic Community (AEC) is a regional economic alliance that is working towards creating a single common market with sustainability as one of the main aspects for this market in their blueprint for 2015.

Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) has formed the Caribbean Green Economy initiative to promote the development of the green economy in Caribbean nations.

POINTS A RESOLUTION SHOULD ADDRESS

- Your resolution should not focus on defining what a green economy is because we will utilize the standard UNEP definition to facilitate a smoother flowing debate. We will not have valuable debating time focused on defining what a green economy is, rather we will discuss how to create a green economy.
 - So what will it take to establish an inclusive green economy?
 - Who will be a part of creating this green economy?
 - Why would this structure work for establishing a green economy?
 - Why would this structure help eradicate poverty?
 - You could potentially utilize the circular economy framework as a potential solution or backbone to your proposed economic structure

- Your resolution will also not focus on defining poverty, it is a complex topic, and multiple academics have proposed working definitions utilized by the UNEP. So again, in the debate, refrain from using our valuable debating time to discuss definitions.
 - The debate and context of the resolution should focus on how to address each level of poverty as there are an identified six types according to academics.
 - Discuss what type of safety net if any should be established to support those out of poverty while the green economy is being implemented
 - Discuss what type of jobs or tasks could be given to those in poverty to empower them in the green economy development process

- You will essentially create a resolution that will address key policies member-states are advised to adopt in order to have the foundation for developing a green economy.
 - This resolution will include the key actors that must be involved,
 - The key institutions or organisations that must be involved
 - The sectors that need to be focused on to facilitate the transition to a green economy and support helping those out of poverty

- You must also consider solutions for how to finance and/or support this initiative, plus who and why will be responsible for monitoring and reporting to ensure this resolution is properly adopted, implemented, and reviewed to meet the primary aim.

For your position paper, please follow this structure:

Background/brief history for how your member-state has dealt with poverty, the poverty issue within your country, and any work/initiatives they have taken towards the green economy.

Discuss what your member-state is currently doing in terms of eradicating poverty, including any major alliances they are a member of currently, and current policies/activities/plans for investing in the green economy

Highlight what solutions you propose to support or endorse during the course of the debate

****KEEP YOUR POSITION PAPER TO 1 PAGE LONG**

RECOMMENDED READING

[Jensen, E., 2009. Teaching with poverty in mind. Alexandria, VA: ASCD.](#)

[A Guidebook to the Green Economy, Issue 1](#)

[Green Economy Assessment Reports by Country](#)

[Post-2015 Note #6: Eradicating Poverty through an Inclusive Green Economy](#)

[Principles for a Green Economy](#)

[Poverty Reduction – Green Economy](#)

[Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication](#)

[Can the Green Economy help Eradicate Poverty?](#)

[Rethinking Poverty: report on the World Social Situation 2010, Chapter 2](#)

[Poverty Eradication and Sustainable Development – Report of the Sec-Gen](#)

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