

Transition to Sustainable Energy Must Be a Central Result of Rio+20

When the countries of the world meet again in Rio de Janeiro this coming June, 2012, 20 years after the original UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), it is urgently needed that the countries take up the issues that were discarded in 1992 and that are still imperative for a sustainable development. The transition to **sustainable energy**² is the most important of these issues. It is increasingly evident from the climate science as well as from the depletion of the easier accessible fossil energy resources that a fast energy transition is necessary. At the same time the technological development has resulted in better technologies for the transition. **Therefore the transition can be done with known technologies**, without significant sacrifices, and in parallel with the **elimination of poverty**. It will also bring additional benefits such as **improved employment**.

In the INFORSE network we have shown how a **timely transition can be made** in Northern countries with high greenhouse gas emissions as well as in villages in the global South, where this transition can be one of the steps on the way out of poverty.

Unfortunately, the negotiators at the UNCED conference **discarded ideas to build a global cooperation and a structure for promotion of sustainable energy**. Later the focus on energy at Commission for Sustainable Development (CSD) **lead to no results**, as countries as well as the UN system showed lack of leadership.

From INFORSE the expectation for the outcome of Rio+20 is that **the transition to sustainable energy is not only welcomed**, but also included as a major cooperation issue for the coming years. This must involve international organisations as well as the countries of the world. All countries and most international organisations are already promoting renewable energy and energy efficiency in some form. In addition the countries have agreed in the international climate negotiations to keep global warming to below 2°C. This climate target can in reality only be reached with a transition to sustainable energy. **The challenge of Rio+20 is then to transform this global agreement into increased global action** and cooperation to realise the sustainable energy transition and thereby the climate target. A part of this challenge is to make it clear that the **unsustainable energy sources, like nuclear power, should not be supported internationally**, in spite of large vested interests. Such support will divert resources from the sustainable energy transition, and could even make it impossible.

Comments on Existing Proposals

The **Green Economy Roadmap** (Towards a Green Economy, published by UNEP 2011) gives many arguments for a transition to sustainable development and it also shows that sustainable energy must be in the center of the transition. Half of the proposed investments shall go to renewable energy and energy efficiency in the model proposal of the Roadmap. In spite of this priority, the proposed energy transition is too slow to meet the climate objectives or the need to replace dwindling fossil energy resources. In effect, faster actions than proposed in the Roadmap are needed. The proposed actions in the Roadmap are shown to be **cost-effective** compared with business as usual, which mean that also faster actions will probably also be cost-effective.

¹ International Network for Sustainable Energy (INFORSE), see www.inforse.org

² By sustainable energy we mean efficient use of renewable energy in sustainable ways

The Roadmap report also has an appropriate focus on the need to phase out subsidies for fossil fuels globally as this holds back the sustainable energy transition in many countries.

The challenge for Rio+20 is now **to turn visions, as those shown in the Green Economy Roadmap, into reality at a fast pace** with international cooperation. The cooperation must deliver advices and support to countries on how to choose the green solutions.

INFORSE supports a continuation of **global sustainable development goals**, as we have seen the positive effect of the Millennium Development Goals. It is important that the goals to be agreed at Rio+20 include a goal for universal access to sustainable energy to eradicate poverty and also a goal for transition to sustainable energy.

INFORSE supports that the framework for **global partnerships** are revitalized as many global partnerships have proven to be effective means of cooperation on specific topics. Therefore, INFORSE is member of several partnerships. The partnerships should be used where they are useful to foster multi-stakeholder action. They should not be an excuse for not acting on the intergovernmental level as well.

Comments on the Implementation Gap

The lack of action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions is probably the most severe "implementation gap" in the world today, but unfortunately, not the only one as also many development goals and environmental goals are not reached.

To reduce greenhouse gas emissions and meet environmental objectives, **a concerted actions are needed from the international community** including financing institutions as well as a change of the promotion mechanisms and the economic drivers in most economics. These must include change of subsidies and taxation.

To end poverty, concerted actions are needed from the global North and South to build sustainable and inclusive economies in all countries that can provide basic needs for all populations, including basic energy services.

Proposals for Specific Mechanisms

For the transition to sustainable energy, involvements of most international institutions are needed including intergovernmental banks. There are also needs for new international structures.

An international agency for renewable energy is already established in the form of IRENA, but it should be better integrated in the international cooperation. In parallel, **an organisation is needed for energy efficiency.**

In addition, a **revision of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)** is needed, which is presently supporting the use of nuclear power including the establishment of nuclear power plants in poor countries. This support is directly counterproductive as this inadequate solution will make the countries even poorer and give them, as well as the world, new safety and proliferation problems. Further, it is necessary to make international regulation and taxation of the fossil fuel combustion of aviation and shipping, which cannot be regulated by individual countries.

Other Specific Elements of the Outcome of Rio+20

In addition to the proposals for agreements and institutions given above, it is needed to **establish a new mechanism** to promote sustainable development **to replace the CSD**. The process should focus directly on improving international cooperation including existing institutions. It should not spend two years for discussions of one issue, but instead should have better managed and better prepared discussions during a maximum of one year for each issue.