



## Sustainable development within and beyond borders

### Background Session III: A strategic vision for economic development and climate stabilization

Climate change is recognized almost universally as a grave threat to global society. Climate stabilization, however, conflicts directly with the current patterns of resource use. This conflict will intensify with poor countries trying to catch up with living standards in the industrialized world. Furthermore, climate change is related to a host of other problems, like biodiversity loss and the degradation of other environmental services. Positive feedbacks in the climate system could bring unforeseen results that outrun our capacity for adaptation. Resolutions to the pending crises imply fundamental transformations. The bottom line is the need to de-couple societal welfare from resource use to accommodate humankind within our finite biosphere.

To search collectively for solutions democracy needs to be institutionalized at local and national levels. At the global level, this implies creating novel institutions for governance. The existing means of international cooperation will have to be improved. The world needs blueprints for action to sustain its struggle for eradicating poverty, reversing environmental degradation and ensuring interregional and intergenerational justice. The climate challenge could serve as springboard for the development of global mechanisms for higher resource productivity and efficiency, environmentally friendly technologies, and sustainable habits and lifestyles.

Within the context of energy generation the challenge is to engender a transformation to a radically new structure, which is not dependent on fossil fuels. For this it would be helpful to switch from the language of targets and trading to the language of investment to realize the potential in the deployment of renewable energy and in institutions for promoting energy efficiency. An investment program could address the two goals of economic development and climate stabilization directly and in an integrated manner.

The large social, political and technological transformations may exceed the limits of current governance structures. But if they are managed with skill, empathy and foresight in a globalizing multi-polar world, they can drive a broad agenda of sustainability and development within borders and beyond.

