

Ein Interview mit Jacqueline Aloisi de Larderel, Abteilungsdirektorin der UN-Umweltorganisation

## UNEP and Global Governance

**Klaus Fichter:** *The process of globalisation has lead to an intensified competition on the world market. Do you consider this to be a race to the top (better international environmental standards) or a race to the bottom (environmental and social dumping)? What are the prerequisites for a race to the top?*

**Jacqueline Aloisi de Larderel:** Increasingly, a number of business decision-makers are discovering that environmental performance also brings a competitive advantage. However, even though recent studies have shown that companies with good environmental records also perform well on the financial markets, too many managers still look for short-term gains and see the environment as a constraint and an added cost rather than as an opportunity. One of the remaining key challenges is to promote awareness at the senior level throughout industry of the economic benefits associated with sound environmental performance. This is especially important for the financial sector.

UNEP, in partnership with numerous other institutions is addressing this challenge through studies, information exchange, experience sharing, capacity building and demonstration projects. For example, UNEP publishes cleaner production case studies demonstrating the short payback of investments, surveys of environmental reports, guidelines on environmental accounting, training materials on environmental management systems or on life-cycle assessment. It organizes workshops and seminars, it brings stakeholders to discuss issues related to production and consumption. More details of these activities can be found on our website at: [www.unepie.org](http://www.unepie.org).

**What are the main UNEP-activities for the integration of environmental protection the international market regulations, e.g. in regard to the greening of GATT or the greening of agreements on foreign direct investments?**

First, UNEP has undertaken a number of activities to develop a better understanding of the linkages between trade and environment, looking, on one side, at the economic and trade impacts of multilateral environmental agreements, and on the other side, at the environmental consequences of trade measures. Second, with the publication and wide

dissemination of a number of reports and specific case studies in the „Trade and Economics“ series, such as the recent report „Subsidies, Over-fishing and Trade“, UNEP has been raising awareness of decision makers and providing them with information to help them integrate environment and trade policies. Finally, UNEP is developing a continuous dialogue and a number of cooperative activities with the World Trade Organisation, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

**One driving factor for the greening of industry is the question to what extent environmental performance of companies are relevant to decisions of private and institutional investors. How does UNEP promote the greening of investment decisions?**

Investment decisions involve numerous partners and in particular government officials, industry managers and financiers. Greening investment decisions therefore implies putting the environment at the core of the decision making process of all these stakeholders.

To catalyse the corresponding change of behavior, UNEP raises awareness and promotes the use of relevant policy instruments, environmental management systems and environmentally sound technologies. The UNEP financial institutions initiatives is only one example of this approach. Signed by over 40 banks, the statement on the environment and sustainable development commits them to develop environmentally sound practices and lending policies. Over 80 insurance companies have signed a similar commitment. Regular outreach meetings, held throughout the world, allow for information exchange and the addition of new signatories. The UNEP International Cleaner Production Declaration commits signatories in industry to promote preventative approaches, allowing the reconciliation of economic growth and environmental protection and to monitor progress. Thanks to funding from the Government of Norway, UNEP is launching demonstration projects on financing cleaner production investments in 5 developing countries. These projects should teach us a lot about the barriers that need to be overcome! „Greening“ investment decisions is clearly a long process.

**What role can eco-leaders and business organizations like the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) play in establishing international environmental standards?**

Peer pressure is healthy, and in all business sectors a strong environmental commitment from respected leaders can catalyse action by other top managers. The innovation and skills of the private sector are needed to implement the sustainable development agenda. In that respect, WBCSD, the International Chamber of Commerce as well as many other international and national industry associations contribute to improved awareness and commitment of industry to environmental performance and sustainable development. They have been active in developing the use of environmental management systems through the ISO 14000 series. Increasingly, quantified environmental goals and targets are set in industry voluntary initiatives or negotiated agreements between industry and governments. However, to be successful, these initiatives and standards have to be verifiable and effectively monitored. I am pleased by the growing number of companies and industry associations which are involved in the partnership between UNEP and Sustainability on „Engaging Stakeholders“, currently in its fourth year. These efforts will lead to an international standard on environmental and social reporting. Finally, let me highlight that we in UNEP expect eco-leaders and industry associations to be pro-active contributors to the development of international environmental agreements currently being developed, particularly in the field of chemicals and in the development of economic instruments, which are urgently needed to catalyse change.

As Mr. Töpfer, the Executive Director of UNEP, puts it in nutshell: „coherent and coordinated environmental policy must stand alongside economic development and social responsibility if we are to meet the challenges of globalizing world, and in particular the challenge of sustainable development.“

### Die Autorin

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