

The Green Economy

This section looks at the issues around the green economy and sustainable development. It explains what “green economy” means, explores the Burmese laws that deal with the green economy, and discusses the influence that international agreements, organisations, and funding could have on Burma’s forestry policies.

What is the “green economy”, and why is it important to sustainable development?

Burma’s government is focusing strongly on developing a green economy – that is, an economy based on environmentally sustainable industries – and has stated that its new environmental law will aim to support the growth of a green economy.¹ However, the government has also said that it will need the support of developed countries in transferring green technology to Burma, especially for developing renewable energy.²

What is the law in Burma about sustainable development and the green economy?

Agenda 21 and the National Sustainable Development Strategy – Green Economy

Agenda 21 states that governments should combat poverty, and should work to integrate environmental concerns into development planning. It suggests that governments consider:

- Establishing effective economic and regulatory policies and voluntary systems for promoting sustainable development;
- Removing or reducing subsidies that encourage unsustainable industries;
- Setting up policies that encourage sustainable development and sustainable resource management, including pricing policies.

The National Environmental Performance Assessment – Green Economy

The EPA suggests that three changes in the Burmese government’s approach could help integrate environmental and economic development:

1. Integrated land use planning – setting aside zones for commercial, agricultural, industrial, and institutional uses to avoid future conflicts. Industry could then be developed in specific industrial estates at a distance from human settlements.
2. Environmental Impact Assessments for large development projects.
3. Integrated watershed management, linking forests, agricultural lands and practices, and rivers.

¹ Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry, "Green Development Initiative in Myanmar."

² "Myanmar Seeks Outside Help to Build 'Green Economy'," (2011),

<http://ph.news.yahoo.com/myanmar-seeks-outside-help-build-green-economy-180046822.html>.

The EPA also criticises the low level of government spending on the environment, and the fact that this spending is broken up across different sectors and ministries, without an overall plan.³

The Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) – Green Economy

The ASEAN Charter, signed in 2007, states that one of ASEAN's objectives is "to promote sustainable development so as to ensure the protection of the region's environment, the sustainability of its natural resources, the preservation of its cultural heritage and the high quality of life of its peoples".⁴

The United Nations Environment Programme – Green Economy

In its recent Green Economy Report, the United Nations Environment Programme defined a green economy as "one that results in *improved human well-being and social equity, while significantly reducing environmental risks and ecological scarcities*."⁵ A green economy emits only a small amount of greenhouse gases, uses resources efficiently, and includes people from throughout society, especially marginalised groups. At the national level, the UNEP advocates governments creating green economies by removing subsidies to environmentally harmful industries, using new market-based instruments, investing in green sectors, having environmental standards for the goods and services the government buys, and improving both environmental laws and the ways those laws are enforced.⁶

The 2011 Green Economy and Green Growth Forum

In November 2011, the government held a forum on how to build a green economy. The forum brought together government representatives and prominent figures from the UN (particularly the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change) and from potential donor governments – especially Norway, which has developed partnerships to prevent deforestation with other developing countries. Daw Aung Sun Suu Kyi also attended the end of the forum.

The forum involved presentations from different sectors of Burmese society on issues to consider in the creation of a green economy, and also a discussion of other countries' experiences. However, the government also used the forum to stress once again the need for assistance and technology transfers from the developed world.⁷

³ Ibid.

⁴ "Charter of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations," ed. Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Singapore: 2007).

⁵ United Nations Environment Programme, "Towards a Green Economy: Pathways to Sustainable Development and Poverty Eradication," (St.-Martin-Bellevue: United Nations Environment Programme, 2011). Page 2.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ei Ei Toe Lwin, "Participants Upbeat after 'Green' Forum," *The Myanmar Times*, 13 November 2011.