

Drupal.behaviors.print = function(context) {window.print();}>

Published on *EurActiv* (<http://www.euractiv.com>)

Source URL: <http://www.euractiv.com/sustainability/eu-pressed-lead-rio20-earth-summit-news-508016>

# EU pressed to lead Rio+20 Earth Summit

Published: 30 September 2011

The European Parliament has called on the EU to take the lead in preparing global green actions for the UN Rio+20 Earth Summit next year.

## Background

The 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) – or 'Rio+20' summit – is being held exactly two decades after a landmark international conference in Rio de Janeiro.

Hosted by Brazil, the 2012 summit will seek to secure renewed commitment for sustainable development and assess progress made. Its two main focuses are the green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development.

The European Commission adopted its Rio+20 communication in June, laying the basis for dialogue between the EU executive, Council and Parliament, individual countries, civil society and business in the run-up to Rio+20, before a unified EU position is submitted to the UN by the beginning of November.

The Commission document called for the adoption of global roadmap to guarantee continued commitment beyond the conference itself.

MEPs yesterday (29 September) voted on a draft resolution prepared by the Parliament's Environment committee on developing a common EU position ahead of the UN the Rio+20 Earth Summit next year.

The 2012 summit is expected to agree on a political document that will guide international action on sustainable development policy for decades to come and give birth to a World Environment Organisation.

The Parliament's resolution supports the European Commission's call for a global "Green Economy Roadmap" and stresses that sustainable growth needs new measures and "accountable targets," including global goals to increase renewable energy and energy efficiency.

The Parliament's draft resolution also called for a phase-out of existing nuclear power plants and opposed the building of any new nuclear power stations, but an amendment tabled by French MEP Françoise Grossetête (European People's Party) removed such suggestions from the final text.

Grossetête said that nuclear power, which provides 80% of France's electricity consumption is a key component of the country's energy security. As long as oil and

gas prices are high, and before renewable energies can reliably replace them, nuclear power remains important, she said.

### EU as a global green pilot

"20 years after the first conference in Rio, we should aim at globally binding targets. The EU should play a key role as it has some practical experience in the fight against climate change and other sustainability issues", said MEP Karl-Heinz Florenz (European People's Party), one of the initiators of the House's non-binding contribution to the Rio+20 debate.

An environmentally-friendly economy as a global standard is the only way forward and "Europe's leading role is an economic, environmental and social opportunity", he added.

In his state of union speech on Wednesday (28 September), European Commission President José Manuel Barroso also outlined Rio+20 as one of the major external activities that the Commission will focus on next year.

Similar comments on the role that the EU could play at global level were made by EU environment Commissioner Janez Potočnik, according to whom the bloc's Resource Efficiency Roadmap, adopted last week, can be seen as the EU's approach to the green economy.

### Green economy roadmap

Addressing the lawmakers ahead of the vote, Commissioner Potočnik said that the global green economy roadmap should "map out all actions undertaken at international level with specific timeframes to ensure commitment well into the future" – exactly what the Commission suggested to the EU27 in its resource efficiency roadmap last week.

"As a complement to international actions and commitments, national actions would depend on national circumstances and could be supported with measures such as best practice examples and policy guidance," he said.

As examples of specific international actions Potočnik suggested "strengthening and expanding of the EU water initiative, including a new agreement on the law of the seas - particularly in areas beyond national jurisdiction - and establishing an international regime on chemicals."

### Next Steps

- **10 Oct. 2011:** Ministers in Environment council to adopt conclusions on Rio+20.
- **By 1 Nov. 2011:** Consolidated EU position to be submitted to UN.
- **4-6 June 2012:** Rio+20 Earth Summit.

### Links

EU official documents

- Oeil: Rio+20 Earth Summit [FR]
- PreLex: Commission Communication : Rio+20: towards the green economy and better [FR] [DE]

Parliament

- European Parliament news: [MEPs call for global green economy targets](#) (29 September 2011) [FR]

#### Political Groups

- Group of the European People's Party (Christian Democrats): [UN conference in Rio needs EU's leading role](#) (29 September 2011) [DE]
- Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance [Sommet de la Terre Rio+20 - Le Parlement européen montre la voie vers la sortie de crise écologique](#) (29 September 2011)

#### International Organisations

- [United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development \(UNCSD\)](#)