

Green industrialisation a precondition for sustainable growth

The latest Economic Report on Africa states that the economic and environmental benefits stemming from greening Africa's industrialisation make the environmental approach the only viable option for the continent's continued development.



Fatima Denton, director of the ECA's Special Initiatives Division at the launch of the ERA on Greening Africa's Industrialisation.

The report, titled *Greening Africa's Industrialisation*, was launched on 3 April during African Development Week.

Global commitments to addressing climate change, such as the agreement reached at the Conference of the Parties (COP21) during the UN Climate Change Conference in Paris in December, set the stage for partnerships to transform Africa's growth prospects. Africa's move to greener industrialisation is not just a step towards meeting global carbon emission targets - it is a precondition for sustainable and inclusive growth.

Late-runner status

Dr Fatima Denton, director of the ECA's Special Initiatives Division, said that green initiatives offer the continent the opportunity to move from the periphery of the global economy to the centre. "Now we have an incredible opportunity to configure our own industrialisation. Africa has an opportunity to take advantage of its 'late-runner' status and it has huge potential to become a front-runner in this new pathway, to basically reshape its own economies and reshape it in a way that it can own."

Although African countries' carbon emissions are low compared to other countries, going green can boost growth, Denton continued. "This is no longer an issue of choice. We have to take this pathway because it makes good economic sense," she said.

The report says Africa can leapfrog traditional carbon-intensive growth methods and champion low-carbon development. It notes that Africa's growth has largely been unequal, has been based on the extraction of raw materials, and has damaged biodiversity and natural resources.

How, it asks, can these patterns be transformed while ensuring steady supplies of water, food and energy? "Africa's move to greener industrialisation is not just a step towards meeting global carbon emission targets - it is a precondition for sustainable and inclusive growth," it says, noting green initiatives, particularly in energy, can benefit manufacturing and other sectors.

Focus on climate change

Russell Bishop, a senior economist from the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate Change, said Africa's future must include a focus on climate change issues. "Africa has the opportunity that has never been achieved in any other economy in the world, which is to grow in a clean way."

Dr Celestin Monga, managing director of the UN Industrial Development Organisation, however, said the goals are noble but questioned whether they're realistic. "I think we all agree that going green is a wonderful goal but we also need to be realistic and honest about the trade-offs that it involves. What are we going to do with the fossil fuels that we currently have? Some of these excellent goals need to be presented in a very realistic way so that we can see the trade-offs."

The report also includes studies on 12 African countries where green industrialisation is gaining momentum. It calls for government leaders to support the transformation, develop green visions and strategies, translate them into policies, and engage stakeholders.

Central to green industrialisation is decoupling energy, investing in infrastructure, and greening cities. While funding such measures will be difficult, it is important to start now, the report says.

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