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Flasbarth says, "We need a green economy"

630,000 new jobs by 2020 as a result of resolute climate protection

The Federal Environment Agency (UBA) sees excellent opportunities to renew the global economy in environmental protection. "Whereas it used to be seen as expensive and a damper to growth, environmental protection now has the potential to be the engine of prosperity in modern economies", said UBA President Jochen Flasbarth upon publication of the annual *Schwerpunkte 2012* report in Berlin. At unchanged production methods with high greenhouse gas emissions and raw materials consumption, our world is ultimately headed towards the brink of ecological and economic collapse. Ahead of the July 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio de Janeiro, Flasbarth is hoping for global impetus. He says, "We need green economy. The fact that it has economic advantages has been proven in Germany, for German businesses are global leaders in exports of environmental protection goods. There are already some two million people with jobs in the environmental protection field. Renewable energies alone have created about 370,000 jobs, a number that has actually continued to grow despite the financial crisis," says Flasbarth. Another 630,000 jobs might be created if the Federal Government climate protection goals to reduce greenhouse gases by 40 percent until 2020 are pursued resolutely.

The scarcity of raw materials is another topic of the UBA's annual publication. Worldwide consumption is rising rapidly, as is the competition to secure these resources. It is a prime example of how economy and ecology might go hand in hand. "The world market price for many raw materials has spiked. It has become economically viable for businesses to produce efficiently and to recycle materials instead of purchasing and repurchasing gold, copper or palladium on the market. It also relieves the burden on the environment", remarks Flasbarth.

The economic strategy pursued to date, which is to seek a solution to the issue of limited resources by making favourable deals with individual supplier countries, is far too short-sighted. It would be better to use fewer resources in production from the onset and to design durable products that are easy to reuse and recycle. Increasing raw material efficiency also holds enormous job creation potential: up to 700,000 jobs could be created by 2030 through concentrated efforts to tap all the savings potential in the manufacturing industry.

The chemicals industry - an important sector in Germany's economy and the engine for innovative products - can also serve as a foundation for a green economy. "Sustainable solutions do not result through regulation alone; businesses can also work in cooperation to achieve it", says Flasbarth. Chemicals leasing is an example of how it can work: the supplier does not make a profit on sales of the greatest amount of chemicals possible, but instead on renting it for certain purposes, e.g. a solvent needed in circuit board production. Wherever possible, the supplier takes the chemical back for treatment and re-use. The user of a chemical only buys the use of the chemicals in addition to its professional and environmentally appropriate disposal. The profit which the supplier earns in chemical leasing is from his know-how. It relieves the stress on the environment as the incentive is great to use fewer chemicals, and waste and emissions are greatly reduced. Another similar example is in hospital hygiene where specialist suppliers make much more efficient use of disinfectants.

Flasbarth encourages industrialized countries to use their great innovation engines to support threshold and developing countries in their sustainable use of chemicals. "The mass production in threshold and developing countries that is required to cover our demand for clothing and shoes is in and of itself cause for grave problems, both for the global environment and locally. We in the more prosperous countries should take greater care not to export risks onto the world market along with our chemicals and chemical processes. We must instead advance sustainable solutions."

The annual publication *Schwerpunkte 2012* is available for free download or can be ordered in print form at: <http://www.umweltbundesamt.de/uba-info-medien-e/4213.html>

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