

**Keynote Address by Chief Emeka Anyaoku
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**Beyond GDP: Measurement tools for a Living Planet
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Dear Commissioners, Members of the European Parliament, distinguished guests:

I am delighted to be here representing my organization, WWF, as one of the joint originators and sponsors of this conference. Twelve years ago we co-hosted a similar gathering, also held here in the European Parliament and also co-sponsored with the European Commission and Club of Rome. It was called “Taking Nature into Account.”

We argued then for a whole new range of measurement tools to help our policy-makers and political leaders to chart a path to sustainability. We likened it to a dashboard in a car. We argued that society needs a vast new array of dials and instruments next to the steering wheel to be able to measure how fast the planet is travelling. We need to know how much fuel we have in our tanks, the engine work rate and temperature, the oil pressure, the water levels, tyre pressures and so on.

The call is the same now as it was 12 years ago – only more urgent. We need to move beyond our reliance on limited, though well-known, dashboard indicators like Gross Domestic Product. We need in other words to move beyond conventional economic accounting. We are calling for new ways to measure and record progress so that we can take the necessary corrective measures to set a more wise development path.

Societies cannot continue to operate as if the planet was a business in liquidation. We cannot continue to turn our backs on pollution and call it someone else’s problem. We cannot continue to call income what in reality is resource depletion. We

cannot claim economic success for development patterns that leave hundreds of millions of people marginalised and which stoke the fears of resentment and conflict.

The WWF mission is to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature. Obviously we have a great deal of work to do to meet that challenge. Our way of living is not only threatening the health and diversity of our planet's species, but has become a huge threat to human survival as well.

WWF has been publishing the Living Planet Report biennially over the last decade. In these reports we have been calling attention to the fact that we are now in what we call **ecological overshoot**. In plain terms, this means we are using more resources and emitting more waste than our planet can handle. Reversing these trends is WWF's goal.

To better understand the distance to our goal, we are using two measures.

The first is the Living Planet Index, now being further refined jointly with The Zoological Society of London. The Living Planet Index is a kind of "Dow Jones" index of nature. It measures the health of our planet's biological diversity. It summarizes population trends of more than 1300 vertebrate species around the world: in the sea, on the land and in freshwater ecosystems. It documents a 30 per cent decline in the average population size of vertebrates since 1970. Quite simply, biodiversity suffers when our planet's ecosystems cannot keep up with human rates of consumption and waste generation. This is now happening at a rate *unprecedented* in human history.

The second, complementary measure tracks human demands on the planet. For this we use the Global Footprint Network's Ecological Footprint, a resource accounting system that measures how much nature we have and how much nature we use. This allows us to compare human demand against nature's available supply.

Nature's supply is comparatively easy to quantify - we have one planet Earth. Human demand has grown rapidly. In 1961 humanity used half of our planet's ecological capacity. According to the most recent data, just over 40 years later, humanity's demand now equals 1.3 planet Earths.

These calculations apply to nations and regions as well. For example, Europeans use 2.6 times more than Europe's ecosystems can provide. If everybody in the world consumes resources and expends wastes at the same rate as Europeans, we would need close to three planet Earths to sustain these lifestyles. If everybody lived like the average American, we would need more than five Earths.

Such ecological deficits are possible because nations import resources from other countries and deplete ecological assets. Without any other planets - (at least for the moment) - to trade with, Planet Earth's ecological deficit, our global overshoot, is entirely dependent on depleting our planet's resource stocks and accumulating yet more waste. Technological breakthroughs may slow the trend but are nothing like enough currently to reverse them.

This global overshoot is liquidating the assets on which human wellbeing depends. It is creating social tensions and conflict, and it is making our existence ever more fragile. It is also taking away the development rights of future generations.

WWF, UNEP, and the World Conservation Union define Sustainable Development as a commitment to "improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of the supporting ecosystems". As this definition implies, ecological indicators alone do not determine sustainable development. We must also be able to measure the quality of life.

Most recently, WWF has been working with others to see if it might be possible to combine the Ecological Footprint with the United Nation's Human Development Index. The challenge with this combination approach is to see if it is possible to live well, which the UN defines as a minimum Human Development Index of 0.8, *and* live within the means of one planet, which means an Ecological Footprint of 1.8 hectares or less per person. This would mean we could fit within one planet and have a satisfactory quality of life.

Living and thinking within the box defined by these two indicators is the single greatest challenge of the 21st century. But nearly all countries in the world are

missing this target. In fact, moderate United Nations projections, with slow, steady growth of economies and populations, indicate that humanity will be living as if we had two planets to support us by 2050. At this level of ecological overshoot, exhaustion of resources and large-scale ecosystem collapse become increasingly likely.

In our new Global Programme Framework, WWF has committed to stop biodiversity loss and help humanity reduce its Footprint to the size of one planet Earth by 2050. The scale of this challenge is absolutely enormous – nothing short of a revolution in our economies, societies, energy choices and lifestyles. We need to move not only beyond GDP, but also far beyond WWF. The reason is obvious: we cannot do this alone.

We see this conference as an important step in building support for a broader range of scientific sustainability tools so they can become robust measures for public policy formulation, evaluation and eventually better decision-making.

It is enormously important and gratifying that the statistical experts from Eurostat, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations institutions and numerous national statistical agencies are here to help us to chart this path. It is important too that the European Union institutions and Member State governments represented so strongly here are putting their progressive environmental policy positions to the test. We simply will not know if carbon dioxide reductions, energy efficiency gains, renewable energy targets, the operation of a carbon market and halting biodiversity goals will be reached or not if we don't measure them – and place the results firmly in front of the leaders setting these ambitions.

In conclusion, it is almost certainly the case that those countries and regions with surplus ecological reserves, - and not the ones relying on continued ecological deficit spending, - which will emerge as the robust and sustainable economies and societies of the future. If this is the case, then it is also true that the GDP indicator does not capture this vital information. Of course, measuring the performance of our economies is important. But economies are a means, not an end. The decision

leaders in governments and industries of today, never mind tomorrow, need to know how our ecological and social assets are performing just as much as our economic ones. I trust that this conference will give us this guidance.

Thank you.