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*UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM*

*AGENDA-SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND
PRODUCTION*

BACKGROUND GUIDE

COMMITTEE- ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME

ABOUT THE COMMITTEE: -

The United Nations Environment Programme is a programme of the United Nations^[2] that coordinates the organization's environmental activities and assists developing countries in implementing environmentally sound policies and practices. It was founded by Maurice Strong, its first director, as a result of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Conference) in June 1972 and has overall responsibility for environmental problems among United Nations agencies; however, international talks on specialized issues, such as addressing climate change or combating desertification, are overseen by other UN organizations, like the Bonn-based Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. UNEP's activities cover a wide range of issues regarding the atmosphere, marine and terrestrial ecosystems, environmental governance and green economy. It has played a significant role in developing international environmental conventions, promoting environmental science and information and illustrating the way those can be implemented in conjunction with policy, working on the development and implementation of policy with national governments, regional institutions in conjunction with environmental non-governmental organizations (NGOs). UNEP has also been active in funding and implementing environment related development projects.

UN Environment has aided in the formulation of guidelines and treaties on issues such as the international trade in potentially harmful chemicals, transboundary air pollution, and contamination of international waterways. Relevant documents, including scientific papers, are available.

INTRODUCTION TO AGENDA: -

Changing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption was identified as one of the three overarching objectives of, and essential requirements for, sustainable development, in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and stated as such in its Introduction. Individual states, regions, local authorities, private sector actors and non-governmental organizations have mobilized in this direction, but we are still a long way from seeing this objective fulfilled or even ensuring a certain path towards making it a reality. However, a significant shift in attitudes can already be seen and plans, actions and initiatives are slowly aligning towards forming a sound and effective 10 Year Framework Plan led by UNEP and equally supported by other UN agencies. The chapter below highlights some of these plans, actions and initiatives that are taking place in Greece, as well as future steps that are being planned to give further impetus to the process and to ensure that the progress achieved leads to a paradigm change in the dominant patterns of consumption and production.

Combating Climate Change by moving towards a competitive economy of low carbon consumption is one of the four pillars of the mission of the Ministry of Environment, Energy and Climate Change (YPEKA) wherein the strategic objective to promote green products and sustainable production and consumption patterns is embedded.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOAL NO.12: -

The sustainable development goal no 12 comments about the sustainable consumption and production

Key features of SDG 12 were: -

- Implement the 10-year framework of programmes on sustainable consumption and production, all countries taking action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries
- By 2030, achieve the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources
- By 2030, halve per capita global food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses
- By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment
- By 2030, substantially reduce waste generation through prevention, reduction, recycling and reuse
- Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle
- Promote public procurement practices that are sustainable, in accordance with national policies and priorities
- By 2030, ensure that people everywhere have the relevant information and awareness for sustainable development and lifestyles in harmony with nature
- Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production
- Develop and implement tools to monitor sustainable development impacts for sustainable tourism that creates jobs and promotes local culture and products

Rationalize inefficient fossil-fuel subsidies that encourage wasteful consumption by removing market distortions, in accordance with national circumstances, including by restructuring taxation and phasing out those harmful subsidies, where they exist, to reflect their environmental impacts, taking fully into account the specific needs and conditions of developing countries and minimizing the possible adverse impacts on their development in a manner that protects the poor and the affected communities

A. SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) can be defined as a strategy to minimize the negative environmental impacts of these activities so that social and economic development can be pursued within the capacity of ecosystems, through the decoupling of economic growth from environmental degradation.¹ While many countries in the world seek social and economic development, traditional patterns of growth have been associated with the depletion of natural resources and threats to sustainability. Thus, the decoupling of these aspects through a transition towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production is a prerequisite to achieving sustainable development.

Energy and water are critical natural resources, necessary for satisfying basic human needs and are of primary concern in the development of sustainable social and economic growth in harmony with the environment. The ninth session of the United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD-9) in May 2000 and April 2001 identified five main energy strategies directed towards sustainable development and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); these include: (a) increasing access to modern energy services; (b) improving energy production and consumption efficiency; (c) promoting the use of renewable energy resources; (d) developing cleaner fossil fuel technologies; and (e) improving energy efficiency in the transport sector. Increased access is required to improve the standard of living in many developing countries and in most of the least developed countries, particularly in rural areas where many people lack access to adequate modern energy services. However, given the current deficit in their provision, population growth and dominant patterns of energy production and consumption, world energy demand is expected to continue to increase, extending dependence on such fossil fuels as oil and natural gas for many years to come.

Water resources are vital for human welfare and sustainable development as well. Clean water and sanitation are essential for basic human health, while access to adequate water resources is needed to support agriculture, industry and other important economic activities. In order to meet the growing demand for freshwater resources in a water-scarce environment, countries in the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) region have drawn upon renewable and non-renewable surface and groundwater and have invested heavily in the production of alternative water resources through various technologies, particularly desalination. Nevertheless, consumption rates continue to outpace the natural rate of recharge of renewable freshwater resources and the production of non-conventional water resources, resulting in the over extraction of water from fossil aquifers and reduction in renewable water resource availability per capita. This situation is likely to worsen in the face of climate change and the continued challenges associated with the management and use of shared water resources that originate outside the region. Ensuring SCP of freshwater resources is thus a fundamental component of sustainable development.

Furthermore, it is important to examine SCP of energy and water in relation to one another since the production and consumption of energy and water are closely linked. A cross-sectoral perspective can also uncover mutual benefits, potential costs and positive synergies of pursuing integrated policies and approaches for SCP.

B. SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION AND GREEN ECONOMY

Before focusing on SCP of energy and water, it may be useful to briefly discuss its relation to the emerging concept of green economy and the ways in which progress in this direction complements the transition towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production. Although there is still no clear definition of what constitutes a green

economy, global momentum is building in its support. For example, the global financial crisis of 2008 and 2009 prompted such countries as China and South Korea to adopt economic stimulus packages that were largely concentrated on the expansion of the so-called green economic sectors.

Arguably, a green economy seeks to promote and invest in activities that can foster economic and social development while safeguarding the environment. Since SCP is a strategy to delink social and economic development from environmental degradation and the depletion of natural resources, green economy policies and SCP are closely related and mutually reinforcing. However, while investments in green economic sectors can lead to environmental improvement, they do not necessarily guarantee environmental sustainability since other economic activities remain tied to increasing consumption, increasing output and extraction of natural resources. Sustainable consumption and production patterns also target interventions by producers and consumers of goods and services at the macroeconomic and microeconomic levels, through changes in policies, behaviour and personal choice. Therefore, while wise investment and economic restructuring through the promotion of green economy strategies can encourage more environment-friendly growth, the transition towards SCP patterns is still needed in order to ensure overall long-term environmental sustainability across all levels of society for the benefit of current and future generations.

ENERGY SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION INDICATORS

Indicators of SCP of energy should be correlated to the environment as well as to energy production and consumption. Accordingly, the Arab Regional Strategy for Sustainable Consumption and Production identified the following indicators for SCP in energy sectors, which are analysed in this chapter.

- *Annual energy consumption (toe) and share of renewable energy (per cent);*
- *Energy intensity (toe/US\$1000);*
- *Per capita energy consumption (toe per capita);*
- *CO₂ per GDP (ton/US\$1000);*
- *CO₂ per capita (ton per capita);*
- *Percentage of leaded gasoline in total (per cent);*
- *Sulphur content in diesel oil (ppm).*

A. ANNUAL ENERGY CONSUMPTION

1. Oil and gas

Energy production in ESCWA member countries contributes significantly to satisfying regional and global energy needs for economic and social development. In 2009, ESCWA member countries produced nearly 18.5 million barrels/day (mbd) of oil and 331.7 billion cubic meters (bcm) of gas, thereby accounting for about 26.3 per cent and 11.1 per cent of the total global oil and gas production respectively.⁴ The energy demand of the region has risen due to rapidly increasing population levels, increased travel and widespread energy subsidies. Indeed, annual consumption of oil and gas increased at an average of 5.52 per cent and 6.74 per cent respectively between 2005 and 2009, while the annual production of oil and gas changed by an average of -1.41 per cent and 6.65 per cent respectively.⁵ This trend is likely to continue as the annual average growth rates of total energy consumption and energy consumption per

capita by 2020 are expected to be about 3.7 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively.

Average primary energy consumption per capita in the ESCWA region reached 1,862 kilograms of oil equivalent (kgoe) in 2009, compared to 1,608 kgoe in 2005, with an average annual growth of 4 per cent.⁷ The average electricity consumption per capita reached 2,244 kilowatt hours (kWh) in 2009, compared to 1,859 kWh in 2006,⁸ representing an average annual growth rate of 6.48 per cent.

However, wide disparities exist in levels of energy consumption within the ESCWA region with consumption levels positively correlated to GDP per capita. Although per capita energy consumption among countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is among the highest in the world, large segments of the population in rural and poor urban areas across the Arab region still do not have adequate access to energy services, while almost one fifth of the Arab population relies on non-commercial fuels for different energy uses.⁹ For instance, Qatar consumed almost 20,000 kgoe of energy per capita in 2007, while the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain consumed over 10,000 kgoe per capita. In contrast, the Sudan and Yemen consumed less than 500 kgoe per capita during the same year.

The outcome document of the 2012 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), The Future We Want, calls for “protecting and managing the natural resource base for economic and social development”, providing renewed appreciation that natural resources and well-functioning ecosystems are a necessary condition of human development. Poverty eradication, the promotion of sustainable consumption and production (SCP), and the protection and management of natural resources are outlined as the “overarching objectives of and essential requirements for sustainable development” (United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolution 66/288, paragraph

4). Presently, SCP is seen as a fundamental instrument for mitigating environmental degradation and resource depletion that often result from economic growth. SCP policies and programmes summarized in the Ten-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10YFP) are helping to secure the resource base which underpins development by enhancing resource efficiency. Higher resource efficiency contributes to minimizing directly harmful effects on humans and to reducing pressure on ecosystems and their ability to provide essential goods and services. SCP thus is key in establishing the fundamentals for increasing quality of life for all (UNEP 2012).

An important outcome from Rio+20 was the mandate to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process aiming to develop global sustainable development goals (SDGs). Covering high priority issues in all dimensions of sustainable development, the SDGs will be universally applicable to all UN Member States and will take the place of the expiring Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The outcome document The Future We Want mandated the creation of an intergovernmental Open Working Group (OWG)

tasked with putting together a proposal for SDGs for consideration by the General Assembly, and for adoption at the UN Sustainable

Development Summit in New York meeting in September 2015. Established in 2013, the OWG met 13 times between March 2013 and July 2014. At its seventh session – dedicated to sustainable cities and human settlements, sustainable transport, sustainable consumption and production (including chemicals and waste), and to climate change and disaster risk reduction – member states acknowledged the need to decouple resource use from economic growth and environmental degradation as a central requirement for the shift towards SCP.

Embedding the objective of SCP in the SDGs can support a shift to sustainable patterns of production and consumption and improving systems of provision. Those patterns will in turn result in reduced environmental impacts due to more efficient resource consumption and reduced waste, and will enable countries to achieve their goals in poverty eradication without undermining the basis of human development. In the OWG proposal for the SDGs of 19th July 2014, the objective of SCP and the more specific objectives, functions and programmes of the Ten-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (the “10YFP”) are reflected in targets in 13 out of the 17 proposed SDGs. The proposed Goal 12 explicitly refers to the need to “ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns”.

Turning the SDGs into reality will require turning the goals’ general aspirations into tangible details and implementation measures. The intergovernmental negotiations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda have started in January 2015 in New York, with a view to having discussions also on the means of implementation (Mol) and global partnership. An important element of the Post-2015 negotiations is likely to focus on identifying indicators that are essential for effective and governance. While general efforts to develop SDG, indicators are under way (e.g., SDSN2015; Pinter et al. 2014)⁴, there is a need for more detailed work that takes the specifics of SCP into account, helping to craft and implement SCP programs and policies relevant to the SDGs. Besides helping to specify the details of SCP, indicators built into policies and decisions can also serve as high-leverage starting points for achieving a transition and ultimately a transformation of inefficient and

unsustainable production and consumption patterns into ones that support achievement of the SDGs and sustainable development generally.









