

United Nations Environment Programme's (UNEP) Vision for Sustainable Production and Consumption in Asia

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1. INTRODUCTION

Cleaner Production (CP) has over the last few years become more and more of a household concept for both industry and governments in many countries. However, at the same time, it is becoming obvious that, while CP remains a key concept in achieving sustainable and efficient production, it is in itself not enough to actually go all the way towards a society based on the sustainable development approach. Consumption is often described as “the other side of the coin” in relation to production. Efficient production is a prerequisite for efficient consumption and it is equally true that the needs and desires of consumers dictates what is produced. An integrated approach to developing sustainable consumption and production has therefore been developed by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), in close cooperation with many partners worldwide.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF A FRAMEWORK FOR SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

At the World Summit for Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002, the Plan of Implementation was adopted, which outlined the decisions and commitments made by the World Summit. Included in this plan is a call for the development of a ten-year framework of programs in support of regional and national initiatives to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns. This is especially important for the Asia-Pacific region, where the number of ‘middle to high income’ consumers - those earning more than US\$7,000 per year - is continuously growing. This active income group size is much more in Asia and the Pacific region than in Western Europe and North America combined. Yet this still represents only 26% of the region’s population. It is clear that the Earth’s natural ecosystems will not cope with the style of industrial revolution seen in Europe or North America. For example, projections show that if car ownership in China, India and Indonesia reached the global average, 200 million vehicles would be added to the global fleet, twice the number of all cars in the USA today.

It is increasingly recognized that – while developed countries should take the lead in this issue – developing countries and countries with economies in transition should actively take part in and benefit from the promotion and implementation of such a framework. In the Asia Pacific region, many national and regional initiatives in the field of sustainable consumption and production are already taking place.

Nevertheless, regional cooperation to improve understanding, information sharing and coordination of efforts between governments and other stakeholders in the region is of paramount importance. In order to enable the Asia Pacific region as a whole to take active part in the global endeavour of choosing new paths to sustainable development, UNEP, United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) organized an expert meeting in the Indonesian city of Yogyakarta during 21 to 23 May 2003. The meeting was hosted by the Indonesian Government and supported by the Hanns Seidel Foundation.

At the meeting, some 70 participants, representing governments, businesses and civil society from 12 countries in the Asia-Pacific region exchanged information and experiences, and developed a common understanding and strategies for promoting sustainable consumption and production patterns in the region. As reflected in the Chairman's Summary, 23 specific areas were identified as being of particular importance to address in order to promote sustainable production and consumption:

Suggestions and Actions

Governments in the region are requested to consider the following suggestions:

- Establish coherent and integrated policies and strategies that create clarity and stability for both day-to-day operations and long-term investments and planning processes in support of paragraph 15 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of WSSD;
- Develop mechanisms/processes to ensure greater involvement of stakeholders in policy making;
- Ensure more effective enforcement of environmental laws and regulations; and
- Prepare a road map for integrated implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.

It was also suggested that governments in partnership with other stakeholders carry out the following actions:

- Governments and other stakeholders are encouraged to develop and apply market-based and voluntary instruments, complementing regulatory instruments;
- Governments, financial institutions and business are encouraged to ensure better access to financing schemes, including loan guarantees and soft loans, particularly to small and medium sized enterprises;
- Governments should implement incentive schemes for consumers and producers;
- Governments in partnership with civil society should implement the UN Guidelines on Consumer Protection (section G on sustainable consumption) through a process of awareness, adoption, and implementation, including legislation and enforcement;
- Governments in partnership with civil society should integrate sustainable consumption and production issues into formal and informal education systems;
- Governments and business should adopt sustainable procurement practices and policies, which should not be used as disguised trade and investment barriers;
- Governments, business and civil society should increase support to establish and initiate research and development on consumer behavior, processes, products and services;
- Business should carry out self-assessment and define strategies and action plans for economic, environmental and social components of business;
- Business should be encouraged to provide credible self-declarations on their products and performance;
- Business are invited to develop and follow codes of conduct on national and regional basis;
- Companies are encouraged to assist small and medium sized enterprises in adopting sustainable consumption and production practices, through their supply chains and/or in their local community context;
- International organizations such as UNEP, United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), the Asian Productivity Organization (APO) and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and national productivity organizations are invited to strengthen existing institutions such as Cleaner Production Centers (CPCs) to enhance their service packages in order to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, for example by including product-related issues, *inter alia*, life-cycle analysis, product and service design and marketing;
- UNEP is invited to explore the possibility of establishing an International Declaration on Sustainable Consumption and Production, or expanding its existing International Declaration on Cleaner Production to that end;

- International organizations such as UNEP, UNIDO and UN-DESA are requested to develop a generic framework tailored to regional needs for effective national commissions/committees on sustainable development;
- International organizations such as UNEP, UNESCO, UNIDO, UN-DESA and APO should establish help centers for national and regional dissemination of information and expertise;
- UNEP and other organizations should develop guidelines and training packages to support capacity building in all stakeholder groups;
- Civil society and governments in partnership with international organizations should develop awareness and communication campaigns for all stakeholders, including rural and urban communities;
- Civil society should continue their leading role with genuine commitment in integrating traditional values and lifestyles in modern society with support from other stakeholders;
- All stakeholders in sustainable consumption and production, including governments, business and civil society should communicate and collaborate – on the local, national and regional level – to plan strategically to achieve sustainable consumption and production patterns.

The outcome from this regional meeting is expected to form a platform for actions by all stakeholders in the region to bring Asia-Pacific into a more sustainable track of development. The recommendations will also be further discussed and merged with similar recommendations from other regions, at a global meeting to be organized in Marrakech, Morocco, in mid-June, 2003 which would then serve as a global reference point for further action.