



WORLD SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SUMMIT

BEYOND 2015: PEOPLE, PLANET & PROGRESS



Workshop on: Resource Efficiency and the Circular Economy

October 6, 2016 | 10.00 – 12.00 noon
Venue: Hall 6, Vigyan Bhawan, New Delhi

It was just a year before, September 2015, Heads of State and Government and High Representatives on the seventieth anniversary of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), adopted a historic decision on a comprehensive, far-reaching and people-centred set of universal and transformative Goals and targets. The resolution was titled, '*Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*'. The development agenda is a successor to the Millennium Development Goals that ended in 2015. The identified goals and targets in the post 2015 development agenda will stimulate actions till 2030 in areas that are extremely important for the humanity and the planet¹.

In an attempt to initiate discussions on approaches and methodologies to be adopted for realising the cherished Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) beyond 2015, the theme of the 2016 World Sustainable Development Summit has been defined as 'Beyond 2015: People, Planet, Progress'. The summit will engage with leading policy-makers, corporates, researchers and members of civil society to find and promote solutions for a sustainable future. The multi-tier, multi stakeholder engagement process of the Summit is uniquely positioned to ensure that the outcomes from the deliberations are meaningful, relevant and practical.

THE RELEVANCE OF THE TOPIC

One of the major issues that the world is currently grappling with is the unprecedented growth in demand for various resources and the associated challenge in the meeting the demand. The push to improve economic growth in countries has always put pressure on most of our natural resources. Never in the past has the conflict between economic growth and resource consumption found high attention by different stakeholders as has been observed in the recent times. The outcome has largely been driven by the rapid industrialisation of emerging economies, as well as the continued high levels of material consumption in developed countries although some evidence of absolute decoupling in certain developed regions of the world have been observed in recent times, led by the European Union (EU). Pressures are likely to evolve in developing countries in the future from growing population, rising aspirations of the vast middle class, demand for improved lifestyles, increased urbanisation etc. The issue surrounding resource consumption has found so much relevance in 2030 agenda for sustainable

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/transformingourworld>

development, that ensuring sustainable consumption and production has been listed as a separate goal in addressing the problem. Several targets under the goal deal with resource efficiency and reducing, reusing and recycling waste.

The impacts of growing resource demand are manifold. Skewed resource distribution in limited regions of the world and the consequent higher market dependencies coupled with rising and volatile prices for raw materials will endanger affordability as well as increase economic burden. The current linear economy approach results in massive waste generation at all stages of a product life cycle right from resource extraction, processing, value addition, consumption and end of life stage. There are growing social conflicts at the resource extraction level reported frequently from various regions of the world for obvious reasons. Globally, increased competition for demand for natural resources has given rise to strategic concerns due to resource nationalism and vulnerability of supply. The above impacts do not obey geographical boundaries and it is the humanity that is and will suffer for our current inaction thereby jeopardizing the desired SDGs.

An assessment by the International Resource Panel, a scientific panel of experts working on helping nations use natural resources sustainably, have found that not the goal 12 of the post 2015 development agenda, aims at ensuring sustainable consumption and production (SCP) through sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, but achievement of 11 other goals are directly or indirectly related to sustainable and efficient use of natural resources.

India's journey of economic growth and development is also exposed to similar environmental, economic and social challenges, and with the economy expected to grow manifold such challenges will increasingly threaten the quality of life and human wellbeing. Such trends have the potential to jeopardize all the initiatives the country has taken so far for achieving sustainable development.

RESOURCE EFFICIENCY AS A MEANS TO ACHIEVING SCP

Resource efficiency is extremely important towards achieving Goal 12 of the SDG thereby contributing to sustainable development and a stable economy. To ensure continuous material flow to meet the requirement, steps need to be taken to convert the economy from a linear model to a circular one, using current resources in a sustainable and efficient manner. Resource efficiency at different stages of the lifecycle of a product would enable sustainable consumption of the existing resources and thus minimise the product's environmental impact. Enhancing resource efficiency leads to financial savings, expansion of services with little or no increase in cost, reduced pollution levels, as well as creation of employment. Due to its cross cutting nature, the concept of resource efficiency calls for an integrated policy approach. Implementing a Circular Economy approach would thus be an effective method to help achieve high resource efficiency. While substituting secondary materials for primary materials can offer a part solution, the circular economy goes beyond recycling as it is based around a restorative industrial system geared towards designing out waste. The argument for a circular economy has moved beyond environmental concerns or good corporate citizenship. It is seen as an emerging opportunity and as a secure and more profitable way of doing business. Make in India would do well to also incentivise or create a framework for businesses to prepare for the next phase of manufacturing. It is important to mention in this regard that India has many traditional

practices that deserve replications and up-scaling within a sector and across sectors and regions towards achieving a resource efficient economy in the future.

ABOUT THE WORKSHOP AND THE OBJECTIVE

In order to have a detailed understanding of the challenges, potential threats of inaction and opportunities created from resource efficiency, the WSDS 2016, will witness an extremely relevant and high level workshop titled '*Resource Efficiency and the Circular Economy*', being jointly organized by TERI, India and European Union. This workshop will provide a venue for both formal and informal exchange of views between Indian and European policymakers and experts on how to achieve greater resource efficiency domestically. It will also allow exploring India's and the EU's outlook as to possible joint initiatives on resource efficiency at multilateral level, including in the G20. It will help in strengthening sectoral, institutional and cultural partnerships among businesses, policy-makers, legislators, and experts which will help in driving integrated planning and policy interactions on resource efficiency.

The EU can play an important part in enabling India realize its development ambition through a circular economy approach. India could benefit from their expertise in policy making and technology, smoothening the transition to a circular economy. In fact, the EU has been promoting and implementing resource efficient approaches in its policies, notably by adopting a dedicated thematic strategy², a flagship initiative³, a roadmap⁴ and most recently a package dedicated to the circular economy⁵. The latter has the objective to help businesses and consumers to use resources in a more sustainable way, by "closing the loop" of product lifecycles through greater recycling and re-use, and bring benefits for both the environment and the economy. Furthermore, the EU is promoting greater efficiency in resource use at the global level, for instance through its Switch-Asia Programmes⁶ and its support to the International Resource Panel⁷. It is also supporting endeavours by its strategic partners, including India. In particular, the EU is about to launch a Resource Efficiency Initiative (REI) in India, a project to foster an efficient and sustainable use of natural resources in the country by supporting the Indian Resource Panel and promoting standards and business best-practices. The workshop will also witness presentations and discussion on some of the key initiatives and outcomes from related projects and activities undertaken as a part of the ongoing collaboration between EU and India.

² COM (2005) 670 of 21.12.2005, <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/natres/index.htm>.

³ COM(2011) 21 of 26.1.2011, http://ec.europa.eu/resource-efficient-europe/index_en.htm.

⁴ COM(2011) 571 of 20.9.2011, http://ec.europa.eu/environment/resource_efficiency/index_en.htm.

⁵ COM(2015) 614 of 2.12.2015, http://ec.europa.eu/environment/circular-economy/index_en.htm.

⁶ <http://www.switch-asia.eu/programme/>.

⁷ www.unep.org/resourcepanel/.