

MINISTERIAL SESSION – CONCEPT NOTE

Leadership in Developed Countries: Reconciling the Role of States and Markets for Sustainable Consumption and Production

Day: 16 February, 2022

Time: 7:00 pm to 8:00 pm IST | [Click here](#) for time in your location

Overview

Since the adoption of Agenda 21, the outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), there has been a focus on addressing unsustainable patterns of production and consumption. Responsible consumption and production (RCP) is now one of the seventeen sustainable development goals (SDGs). SDG 12 seeks to encourage reduction of wasteful consumption and efficiency in production patterns by raising awareness and promoting responsible practices among governments, businesses and consumers. It recognizes that sustainable consumption and production (SCP) should be at the centre of the sustainable development agenda. Implementation of SDG 12 is linked to the achievement of overall development plans, the reduction of future economic, environmental, and social costs, strengthening of economic competitiveness, and the reduction of poverty. RCP/ SCP recognize that economic growth should be decoupled from environmental degradation, with a focus on increasing resource efficiency and promoting sustainable lifestyles. According to a 2020 report by the United Nations Environment Programme, if the global population reaches 9.6 billion by 2050, it would require almost three planets to provide the natural resources needed to sustain current lifestyles. Environmental justice literature highlights that wasteful consumption patterns, as well as limited useful life of products have created overconsumption in high-income countries, and generated massive quantities of waste, which are often disposed of in developing countries.

Role of Consumers and Producers

Two schools of thoughts are dominant in the current literature on sustainable consumption and production patterns (Geels et al. 2015). The first one, a reformist position, focuses on corporations and private firms pursuing green eco-innovations and consumers buying eco-efficient products. The second school, dubbed a revolutionary position, is more radical and advocates the abolishment of capitalism, materialism, and consumerism, and promotes values such as frugality, sufficiency, and localism. Recently, a third school of thought has gained traction called a reconfiguration position, which provides a middle ground between reformist and revolutionary schools of thought. The reconfiguration position argues sustainable production and consumption should focus on the transformation of ‘socio-technical systems and daily life practices in domains such as mobility, food, and energy provision and use’. Transitions towards new transport, electricity, heat or agro-food systems and practices are more radical than the solutions in the reformist position, but do not necessarily presume the abandonment of capitalism, economic growth or a total embrace of frugality.

Taking a Lifecycle-based Approach

It is also essential that a lifecycle-based approach be taken across value chains considering the extraction, design, processing, transport, storage, use and disposal of products and services. Although the role of private players and individual actions contribute to the responsible consumption and production agenda, it needs to be complemented by state support to send both regulatory and market signals. It is also crucial that sectors such as the advertising industry be brought under the purview of regulatory measures. A holistic approach considering a mix of

policy instruments across various sectors, stages of lifecycle, and policy phases, and among targeted actors is needed when designing SCP plans and policies (see the following matrix).

Matrix for developing a holistic RCP/ SCP strategy

Policy instruments	Policy cycle phase	SDG 12 Themes	Lifecycle stage	Actors
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Macro polices, frameworks, roadmaps, plans or strategies • Legal/regulatory instruments • Economic/fiscal instruments • Voluntary/information-based instruments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Under development (initial stage) • Just adopted • Under implementation through specific actions • Monitored and evaluated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural resources • Sustainable public procurement and subsidies related policies • Agriculture and food • Tourism • Waste • Scientific research, Development and Innovation • Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extraction/Upstream Resource Management • Design • Manufacturing/Processing • Use phase • Disposal phase 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy/regulatory • Investment • Extractors • Designers • Manufacturers • Consumers • Educators • Advertising industry • Sub-national units

Source: Author Compilation

Role of States and Markets

To implement SDG 12 effectively in the post-COVID world, there is a need to move away from the unilateral focus on private or corporate production and consumption patterns towards a strategy that also takes into consideration the drivers behind these patterns. For instance, the perception of markets as a free-standing entity with occasional regulatory interventions is obsolete. The green marketing paradigm acts as a significant contributor to this transition towards sustainable production and consumption practices. Using market mechanisms and green marketing mix, states and private players can come together in making environmental problems more urgent in consumers' mind, thus stimulating their green choices to improve environmental sustainability.

Bibliography

- Bick, R., Halsey, E., & Ekenga, C. C. (2018). The global environmental injustice of fast fashion. *Environmental Health*. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1186/s12940-018-0433-7>
- Geels, F. W., McMeekin, A., Mylan, J., & Southerton, D. (2015). A critical appraisal of Sustainable Consumption and Production research: The reformist, revolutionary and reconfiguration positions. *Global Environmental Change*, 34, 1-12.

Key Questions

[1] What policy instruments have worked in your country – macro frameworks, regulatory instruments (banning certain types of waste), fiscal measures (carbon tax, subsidies), market instruments (public procurement), information instruments (eco-labels), or voluntary instruments (sustainability reporting)?

[2] Today, financial markets play a greater role in determining what is to be valued and consumed, and how it is to be produced. How can markets reorient themselves to promote sustainable consumption and production patterns, and what strategies can aid in this process?

[3] How can states play a greater role in directing market signals towards sustainable consumption and production patterns? What policies have worked in the past, and which ones have not?

[4] How can awareness be raised on sustainable lifestyles including through mediums such as formal education, consumer awareness, responsible advertising and citizen movements?

Format of the Session

The session will involve a moderated discussion, which will start with brief remarks by the moderators followed by the 6-7 minutes long addresses/ statements by the Ministers. The moderator will choose to invite the speakers in the order they choose. After the addresses, the moderators may pose 1-2 questions to the esteemed speakers based on issues emerging from the addresses. Finally, the moderators will sum up the discussions. Strict time management is to be followed. There will be an on-screen timer for the same. The order of the speaker will be decided by the moderator.

Session Line-up

Moderators

- Mr Arne Walther, Former Chairman, International Energy Agency
- Mr Manjeev Singh Puri, Distinguished Fellow, The Energy and Resources Institute

Ministerial Address

- Mr John Forbes Kerry, United States Special Presidential Envoy for Climate
- Mr Espen Barth Eide, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry of Climate and Environment, Norway
- Ms Steffi Lemke, Hon'ble Minister, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection, Germany
- Mr Steven Guilbeault, Hon'ble Minister of Environment and Climate Change, Canada
- Ms. Emma Kari, Hon'ble Minister of the Environment and Climate Change
- Ms Barbara Pompili, Hon'ble Minister of Ecological Transition, France
- Ms Teresa Ribera Rodríguez, Hon'ble Minister, Ministry for the Ecological Transition and Demographic Challenge, Spain