Check Against Delivery

U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development (UN CSD) 18th Session, 2010

Business and Industry Major Group

Waste Management

May 5, 2010

For business too, there are linkages between waste management and all the other issues under discussion in this issue cycle, and with none moreso than SCP. Enterprises and sectors also struggle with the diverse types of waste to be addressed, whether post-industrial, post-consumer, transport-related, construction-related or from agriculture and natural resource extraction and processing. A number of international instruments exist to deal with these challenges at global level, chief amongst them is the Basel Convention, as well as regional, national and local efforts, some of which have been mentioned already by panelists. Implementing these must be our starting point.

Promoting waste minimization and environmentally sound management of wastes is linked with the each of the 3 pillars of sustainability - water and air quality, ecosystem protection, commodity markets (including for materials for recycling), governance, infrastructure and capacity, as well as with health, employment and economic development. Consumers groups, local communities and authorities and other stakeholders are indispensable partners – focusing on just one societal party will not address the improvements that can be made all along the value chain, by educated consumers, by adequately resourced and trained local authorities, and so on. And as we have heard, different regions and jurisdictions will likely have different priorities and challenges.

Waste minimization and efficiency are bottom-line considerations and intrinsic to the management systems of many businesses – even more compellingly, they are increasingly important for the many types of customers we serve, whether they be consumers, other businesses or governments – as such, they have become an imperative, integrated by many companies as a fundamental part of cleaner production. So, waste minimization and management practices make good business sense in keeping costs down and in enhancing productivity and competitiveness, as well as answering clear signals from the public, retailers, and regulators. Business has gotten the message.

If we put our "green economy" glasses on, we can see that waste is indeed a resource, but like any resource, requires the right capacity, knowhow and infrastructure to gain any benefit from it. In addition to providing a source of energy as the Indian bio-gas video at the outset showed us, there are other potential uses. Like UNEP's Executive Director, Achim Steiner, we see environmentally sound re-use and recovery as a fundamental part of greening economies and greening jobs. This is particularly relevant to the e-waste

challenge, which several government delegations have drawn attention to. There are numerous initiatives and partnerships to address e-waste, whether through take-back, environmental sound recovery and management or capacity building. A good list can be found in the Basel Convention document, UNEP CHW.9/INF/10.

For business, key areas for focus in the waste management area during this CSD session are:

1) Enabling frameworks and integrated multisectoral approaches to environmentally sound waste minimization and management
2) Supply and Value Chains working together – shared product responsibility, retailer partnerships and procurement, working with SMEs
3) Technology Cooperation and Capacity building through partnerships on eco- and resource-efficiency – innovating to design for environment and reduce waste, increase recycled content, improve re-useability and recyclability and bio-degradability.

One example of a business initiative in the e-waste area is the Global E-sustainability Initiative, or GESI. GESI is a global partnership of ICT companies that promotes technologies for a sustainable development. GESI fosters global and open cooperation, informs the public of members' voluntary actions to improve sustainability performance, and promotes technologies that foster sustainable development. GESI is also developing tools and processes to measure, monitor and improve supply chain corporate responsibility performance across the ICT sector -- these include supplier self-assessment questionnaires, risk assessment tools, common audit protocols and a joint audit process, web-based data management tools (E-TASC) and other learning and capability building strategies

We are encouraged to hear many common chords emerging in this challenging issue this afternoon. While existing regulatory and market drivers and competition already offer powerful incentives to improve performance in these areas and promote innovation, more can and should be done. Our next focus should be on technology solutions, management systems and policy frameworks that incentivize and support efficiency and better environmental practices, and their implementation and broader use. Within business, technological innovation to close manufacturing loops will be a key area for further action. Industrial parks practicing "industrial ecology", materials and waste exchanges, and environmentally sound energy recovery from post consumer waste are also areas for further development.