



United Nations Division for Sustainable Development
Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Sustainable Consumption and Production

*An expert group meeting in preparation for HLPF 2018:
Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies*

Thursday 3 – Friday 4 May 2018

United Nations Headquarters, New York
Conference Room 9 (TBC)

Concept Note

Background

The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), the United Nations' central platform for follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), will be convened from 9-18 July 2018, under the theme "Transformation towards sustainable and resilient societies". The session will review, progress towards achieving SDGs 6, 7, 11, 12, 15 and 17, while mindful of the indivisible and global nature of the full set of SDGs.

In the 2030 Agenda, countries committed *“to making fundamental changes in the way that our societies produce and consume goods and services. Governments, international organizations, the business sector and other non-state actors and individuals must contribute to changing unsustainable consumption and production patterns, including through the mobilization, from all sources, of financial and technical assistance to strengthen developing countries’ scientific, technological and innovative capacities to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production. We encourage the implementation of the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production. All countries take action, with developed countries taking the lead, taking into account the development and capabilities of developing countries¹”*.

SDG 12 guides the formulation and implementation of policies, mechanisms and partnerships to ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns (SCP) in the global economy, recognizing that SCP is not only an objective in its own right, but also a critical element of strategies to achieve the entire 2030 Agenda in an integrated manner. While it represents a stand alone goal, the shift to sustainable consumption and production necessarily underpins a wide range of SDGs and their targets. The targets of SDG12, among others, aim at the implementation of the 10-year framework of programmes on SCP, the sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources, the reduction of global food waste and waste generation, the environmentally sound management of

¹ Paragraph 28, 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, sustainable practices and integration of sustainability information into companies' reporting cycles, and support for developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production. The EGM will approach discussions on SDG 12 through a number of specific cross-cutting areas where efforts can potentially leverage progress toward its targets, as well as towards targets in other goals under review in 2018.

This expert group meeting (EGM) will focus on SDG12 and its interlinkages with other SDGs and topics of the 2030 Agenda. It is informed by the discussions held at the EGM on “Advancing the 2030 Agenda: Interlinkages and Common Themes at HLPF2018”, held from 25-26 January 2018 in New York. The meeting delivered a number of key messages with particular relevance for SCP as defined in SDG12. There is recognition that achieving SDG 12 requires changes in both the demand and supply side, which implies changes in behavior and in the way economic development is pursued. A transformative shift is needed away from economic models that value growth for growth's sake, and which create linear and inefficient resource flows, toward a new mind-set that respects planetary boundaries, recognizes the economy as a subset of nature, and supports the concept of living in harmony with nature as reflected in SDG target 12.8.

Governments have the important task of employing resources while protecting the environment and regulating private sector activity; accountable governance at all levels is needed to understand the appropriate incentives, regulations and relationships with the private sector, especially where there are trade-offs and synergies. While changing consumer behavior is important, and younger people are more aware of sustainability challenges, it is also important to target how corporations operate, as they have a significant impact on how resources are deployed, what goods and services are on offer to consumers and what those consumers ultimately choose. Regional approaches can lead to greater ownership of actions and progress toward multiple goals, and partnerships involving the private sector and multi-stakeholder actors will be essential for achieving SDG 12, as the private sector retains much of the wealth, technology and capital necessary to enable changes toward SCP. However, factors such as trade relations, institutional arrangements, and other power dynamics can negatively affect, and even undo, the efforts to achieve the necessary transformative shift to SCP patterns.

Thematic issues

SCP and climate action

SCP is not only the objective of SDG12 but also a way to approach the whole 2030 Agenda in an integrated manner. Together with the Paris Agreement on Climate Change (SDG13 will be under review at HLPF2019) they set a range of universal transformative objectives for shifting all countries onto a sustainable and low-carbon development path. The two agendas are deeply interdependent and reflect a strong potential for mutual benefits – they also both have the shift to sustainable consumption and production patterns embedded at their core. SDG 12 is instrumental for reconciling economic, social and environmental objectives and decoupling Greenhouse Gas Emissions (GHG) from economic growth. While it represents a stand-alone goal, sustainable consumption and production is an enabler for a wide range of SDGs and their targets.



The EGM will therefore address the potential of how policy interventions related to SDG12 can catalyze implementation of additional SDGs and climate goals as set forth in the Paris Agreement. National plans to further SCP, SDG implementation and nationally determined contributions (NDCs) encompass strategies to foster resource-efficiency in goods and services production, circular economy, sustainable waste management, reuse and recycling, sustainable management of natural resources, and sustainable consumption and diet.

SCP and sustainable transport

Sustainable transport is crucial for sustainable development and the achievement of the 2030 Agenda by providing access and connecting people and communities to jobs, schools and health care. Transport also delivers goods and services to rural and urban communities, thus providing opportunities and leaving no one behind. In the 2030 Agenda, sustainable transport is mainstreamed across several SDGs and targets, especially those related to food security, climate change, health, energy, economic growth, infrastructure, and cities and human settlements. The importance of adjusting transport modes and policies for climate action is further recognized under the UNFCCC. The transport sector will be playing a particularly important role in the achievement of the Paris Agreement, given the fact that close to a quarter of energy-related global GHG emissions come from transport and that these emissions are projected to grow substantially in the years to come.

Sustainable transport solutions should be green, efficient, equitable and safe. The principles of SCP, such as resource efficiency, are therefore of utmost importance for the transport sector. The EGM will therefore analyze the interlinkages between sustainable transport and SCP and highlight recommendations aimed at supporting the achievement of sustainable transport through policies and actions for SCP. Topics discussed will, among others, be the optimization of resources (e.g., energy, technology, space, institutions, and regulations) to generate an efficient transport system or network and measures aimed at reducing a diverse set of environmental impacts caused by the transport sector (e.g., climate change, air and noise pollution). The global mobility report of the Sustainable Mobility for All (SuM4All) initiative, and in particular its two chapters on energy efficiency and green mobility, will inform discussions.

SCP and ocean actions

Actions aimed at meeting SDG 12 and SDG 14 targets and other ocean-related goals are closely interlinked. As an example, environmentally sound waste management on land may effectively reduce sources of land-based marine pollution, including plastics. Likewise, sustainable fisheries management can effectively address the by-catch and discards problem, as well as post-harvest losses. There is a potential to address negative impacts on the marine environment by redesigning value chains which either extract resources from oceans, or create pollution which (ultimately) impacts them.

There remains a need to consider actions aimed at achieving some targets which might negatively affect progress in achieving other targets. For example, while increasing aquaculture production may contribute to economic benefits and to reducing pressures on natural aquatic resources, it may



also result in undermining food and nutrition security and livelihoods of subsistent, small-scale and artisanal fishers. Coastal fishing communities and marine and coastal ecosystems can be adversely affected if feedstocks for aquaculture are sourced in an irresponsible manner. In view of these interlinkages (both co-benefits and trade-offs), the significance of the ocean and ocean-related activities in ensuring SCP is important.

SCP and plastic pollution in the ocean

Only a small percentage of plastic waste is recycled, while the rest of it is either accumulating in landfills or is discarded in the natural environment, eventually ending up and breaking down in the ocean. As a result, UN Environment estimated last year that there are already at least 51 trillion microplastic particles in the ocean. Marine litter could thus directly hinder the achievement of SDGs 2, 3, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14 and 15.

The potential risk of plastic leakage into the ocean is a high possibility in all phases of a product's life cycle. Achieving SDG 12 through environmentally sound management of plastic products and waste through their life cycle would reduce of the amount of plastic litter ending up in the ocean and would help countries implement the 2030 Agenda. The meeting will include a session focusing on ways of reducing plastic pollution through improved production, consumption and waste management. The session also aims to identify the role of governments, companies and citizens in the fight against plastic pollution.

SCP and food loss and waste

It is estimated that one third, or 1.3 billion tons, of all food annually produced for human consumption is lost or wasted, at a cost of more than USD 940 billion to the global economy. SDG 12.3 calls on the world to “by 2030, halve per capita food waste at the retail and consumer levels and reduce food losses along production and supply chains, including post-harvest losses”. Food losses occur along the supply chain from harvest and post-harvest handling to storage and processing. Food losses are largely unintentional, caused by inefficiencies in the food supply chain such as insufficient access to energy and technologies, poor infrastructure and logistics, and inadequate market access, as well as managerial limitations of supply chain actors. Climatic changes and natural disasters can also lead to food losses. At the retailer and end-consumer levels, a great amount of food is wasted as well.

The energy used to harvest, transport, store, process and cook food that will ultimately be lost or wasted and decaying food in landfills release greenhouse gases and generate serious environmental impacts. The Meeting will discuss ways of addressing food loss and waste in the context of a holistic approach to achieving SCP patterns and the resulting implications for the achievement of the overall 2030 Agenda.

Participation and organization

The EGM is organized by the Division for Sustainable Development, Department of Economic and Social Affairs in consultation with UNEP, FAO and other relevant entities.



Participation is by invitation while additional requests for attendance will be considered, space permitting. Participants will be drawn from experts with national planning experience related to sustainable consumption and production, the business community, think-tanks, academia, major groups and other stakeholders and the UN system.

The Meeting will be organized to facilitate frank discussion and interactive engagement to define actions and policies to achieve SDG12. Power point presentations and written statements are discouraged. Solution-oriented inputs in the form of short background notes or hand-outs of presentations are welcomed and will be published on the meeting's webpage, when available. All available materials will be shared with participants in advance of the meeting,

Each session will be guided by a moderator and a limited number of kick-off interventions focused on a set of guiding questions. All participants are encouraged to actively engage in the discussions. The working language of the Meeting will be in English.

Outcome

The meeting outcome is expected to provide recommendations for policymakers on how to promote implementation of sustainable consumption and production in the context of the 2030 Agenda. A short outcome document with key messages and recommendations emerging from the EGM will contribute to the thematic review of SDG12 at the upcoming 2018 HLPF. All meeting materials will be made available on the meeting website.

Programme outline

The meeting will begin on Thursday 3 May at 10am, to allow time for security screening, access and registration on the premises. It will finish on Friday 4 May at 3:30pm. Details regarding logistics will be sent separately to confirmed participants.

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