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European Union and its Member States - Speaking Points on "Sustainable consumption and production (including chemicals and waste)"

delivered by

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I have the honour to speak on behalf of the EU and its Member States. The full statement will be made available on the website.

The EU and its MS are fully committed to eradicating poverty and to ensuring a sustainable and prosperous future for all, based on a coherent and universal approach that integrates social, economic and environmental aspects. Shifting to more sustainable consumption and production (SCP) patterns and sound management of chemicals and waste can make significant contributions to these aims.

Despite many commitments of the global community, current patterns of production and consumption (both public and private) are still not sustainable due to excessive, inefficient or irresponsible resource use resulting in negative impacts on health, the environment and the economy, such as pollution, loss of biodiversity or climate change. If not shifted to a sustainable path, and in the context of a rapidly growing global population, we are in danger of exceeding the capacity of the planet in terms of resources and ecosystem services essential to sustaining life and economic activity. For example, on current trends, demand for food is expected to increase by around 38% by 2030, freshwater by 55% and energy by nearly one third. It is usually the poorest and the most vulnerable that are the first victims of unsustainable production and consumption (as well as of unsound management of chemicals and waste)

There are significant benefits of SCP: reducing environmental damage and resource and energy consumption, increasing reuse and recycling of products and materials, creating greater demand for a wider choice of sustainable products for consumers, and improving traceability over the product supply chain. SCP creates new business opportunities by stimulating innovations in resource efficient production, consumption and relevant services, generating direct net cost savings, and can have positive impacts in a range of areas such as health, job creation, agriculture, energy, waste, water, air, chemical pollution and natural resources. It can thus not be seen in isolation, but as an integral part of efforts to achieve results in all these areas. It can also help avoid substantial remediation costs. SCP has the potential to be a key driver for more sustainable and inclusive growth, while decoupling

economic growth from resource use and pollution, and favouring a circular economy model where wastes are used as resources.

Better governance and greater corporate social responsibility are also crucial to help ensure that business and production patterns do not generate negative impacts, but instead improve social equality and labour standards, including workers' health and safety.

SCP has universal relevance. For industrialized countries and countries with high material consumption, it means resource- and energy-efficiency in production and adoption of more sustainable lifestyles. For many developing countries, it means opportunities to achieve human wellbeing and economic prosperity by leapfrogging to more clean and efficient practices and technologies. All relevant stakeholders (private and public sector, civil society) must be engaged.

We can build our efforts on the 10 Year Framework of Programmes (10 YFP) to enhance international cooperation to accelerate the shift towards SCP in all countries. Programmes under the framework aim at contributing to resource efficiency and decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation and resource use while creating decent jobs and new economic opportunities, and should proceed fast. The EU has also made the issue of SCP a priority in its external regional cooperation strategies (e.g. through its SWITCH programme).

A number specific issues need to be addressed:

- On the **production** side, increasing the numbers of products and services with sustainability **standards and labelling**; increasing company reporting on sustainability performance; building in life-cycle analysis throughout all design stages of products; promoting joint assessments allowing full appraisal of all aspects of sustainability and promoting market and policy incentives (notably for innovative businesses that often struggle to enter and establish themselves) is key. Promoting innovative and resource-efficient production processes is also essential, for large industrial plants as well as for SMEs.

- On the **consumption** side, SCP does not necessarily imply that one should only consume less, but that one should be able to choose quality products and services with much smaller negative environmental, health and social impacts. Incentives need to be put in place to encourage citizens, businesses and public authorities to shift towards a sustainable consumption path for example through awareness raising, consumer information, appropriate pricing strategies, as well as the phasing out of inefficient and harmful products as well as the gradual elimination of environmental harmful subsidies, including fossil fuel. Non-discriminatory, ambitious and transparent sustainability criteria in procurement can be an important instrument for authorities to create market incentives for sustainable production practices.

- Sustainable production cannot be achieved without the strengthening of **labour standards**, with a focus on their implementation and enforcement, and without the elimination of all forms of discrimination in the work place.

Let me now focus on a few key areas:

- **Buildings and Construction** have high environmental impacts and also represent labour-intensive activities. The material, energy and water efficiency and indoor environment of new buildings should be improved, along with the continuous renovation and refurbishment of the existing building stock, while respecting core labour standards. Research and innovation in this field can be particularly important and relevant training, awareness raising and service promotion necessary.

- **Food** production and consumption (as well as food waste) are some of the main drivers of the unsustainable use of a range of natural resources. For example, 70% of extracted fresh water is used in agriculture, and food production and the supply chain account for 30% of total global energy use. Diets with excessive intakes of meat, fat and sugar are a risk for health and for the environmental systems on which food production depends. Reducing food waste would also put less pressure on production. Reducing the use of harmful pesticides or using organic farming practices will also lead to positive impact. Objectives should be to reduce food waste and losses (including post-harvest losses; these can be as high as 50% in some cases), and to promote more efficient use of resources globally and promote a shift in diets in line with WHO guidelines.

- **Tourism** is another sector of relevance, first because sustainable tourism can mitigate the adverse environmental and social effects, and second because responsible tourism has a large potential for sustainable economic growth in many countries, notably to the benefit of some vulnerable people.

As for chemicals and waste, which are to be treated as an integral part of sustainable development:

Waste is increasingly an issue of universal concern. In this regard we should view waste as a resource, promote waste prevention and reuse, increasing recycling and recovery of valuable materials, and reduce disposal to landfill. Specific waste streams, such as electronic waste, plastics (particularly in the marine environment), construction and demolition waste, medical and chemical residues; organic waste and end-of-life vehicles, also need to be addressed. Implementation of the framework for the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes and other wastes adopted in May 2013 under the Basel Convention will also play an important global role.

Looking specifically to chemicals, for which we are seeing an increased use, it is estimated by WHO that exposure to certain **chemicals** results in more deaths than those caused by HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. The sound management of chemicals and wastes minimizes adverse effects on human health, the environment and the economy, and needs to be promoted in the future framework. The exposure of workers and the public to harmful substances, including in products, should be minimised. We also need to stop the leaching of toxic substances into the environment, especially when there are risks to public health as can be the case with the pollution of water courses.

In summary, the EU and its Member States believe that sustainable consumption and production, and sound management of chemicals and waste, can act as a strong driver for a transformational change in the post 2015 development agenda.