



**SEVENTH SESSION OF THE OPEN WORKING GROUP OF THE GENERAL  
ASSEMBLY ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

*New York, 6 – 10 January 2014*

**Statement of Mr. Paolo Soprano  
Director for Sustainable Development and NGOs  
Ministry for the Environment Land and Sea of Italy**

**Interactive exchange of views on  
*“Sustainable consumption and production, including chemicals and waste”***

We have the honor to make this intervention also on behalf of Turkey and Spain, with whom we are pleased to share the membership in this Open Working Group.

Distinguished co-Chairs, Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. At present, we are increasingly using up the world’s natural resource base and we are undermining the economic prosperity and the well-being of future generations. The challenge is to halt and reverse this trend through a full-scale transition with the overall objective of moving from relative to absolute decoupling. This challenge is at the core of sustainable development. Sustainable consumption and production (SCP) is not just another overarching theme, it is the foundation of the paradigm that should allow us to meet our consumption needs, as articulated in the MDGs, within the ecological carrying capacity of the planet.
2. Sustainable development is not possible without sustainable consumption and production. It is, therefore, essential to increase the ownership and awareness of sustainable consumption and production. A move to sustainable consumption and production could deliver important social benefits and enable countries, companies and communities to do more and better, with less. It is a tool to increase net welfare gains from economic

activities, by reducing resource use and depletion as well as pollution and environmental degradation.

3. As was the case for the MDGs, universally endorsed goals are key to ensure broad support and action from all actors. SCP has been widely recognized as an overarching objective and essential prerequisite for sustainable development and this should be reflected in the SDGs. Creating a SDG would increase SCP's up-front visibility and would allow to capture its full breath, since particular aspects of consumption and production will not be possible to fit under other SDGs.
4. An overarching goal on SCP should build upon agreed elements (The Future We Want, JPOI, Agenda 21, Rio Declaration, etc.) and support all Rio principles, with particular regards to principle 8, which directly calls for a shift towards SCP as a condition for achieving better quality of life for all people, principle 15, known as the polluters pays principle, and principle 16, namely the precautionary principle.
5. Sustainable consumption and production is one of the areas where the interlinkages among sectors and the interrelatedness among social, economic, environmental and, allow me to add, cultural aspects are evident. In order to avoid a silos approach and to better capture the scale of SCP, a lifecycle perspective, an approach that is at the core of SCP, should be embedded in other goals. Such approach would allow to connect the dots in the complexity and magnitude of sustainable development challenges and to create a coherent and effective logical framework – the SDGs – capable of providing tangible solutions to such challenges.

Distinguished Participants,

6. Sustainable consumption and production is an extremely critical concept as it emphasizes the striking contrast between overconsumption and underconsumption. It is nonetheless an effective tool to bridge the gaps between countries in different stages of development, as efforts are focused on curbing increasingly unsustainable trends, promoting well-

being, gender equality and social equity for all, and adopting policies and measures such as using and promoting clean technologies.

7. There is a need to capture the essence of sustainable consumption and production also by working on targets and indicators and defining baselines. Some countries have consumption patterns exceeding sustainability thresholds, in particular the available bio-capacity, while others still need to meet up with basic levels of well-being and are presently operating well below ecological limits. It is, therefore, extremely challenging to define goals, not saying targets and indicators, capable of reflecting such reality. A continuation of the recent dialogue with the statistical community could be useful on this issue.
8. Sustainable consumption and production goals should be nonetheless tailored in such a way that the benefits of strong early action outweigh the costs of inaction in the long run. Governments together with relevant stakeholder and in cooperation with regional and international institutions should take the lead in creating an enabling environment for sustainable consumption and production to take place. Awareness raising programs, including the integration of SCP into education curricula at all levels has a crucial role in particular in creating the linkages between the three pillars of sustainable development.
9. Understanding the drivers of production and consumption and analyzing the patterns in society responding to them is an essential requirement to better frame SCP in the context of the SDGs and the post 2015 agenda. The TST issue brief informing this meeting, together with the magnitude of work done at all levels in particular under the Marrakech Process and more recently in the 10YFP, provide for useful insights and valuable inputs on how to define SCP and on the way forward.

Distinguished Colleagues and Participants,

10. Waste and chemicals are tightly linked to SCP, as they are part of our production processes and consumption habits. There is a need, at a national level and internationally, to decouple environmental degradation and resource consumption from economic growth

and this is to be done by promoting waste hierarchy. We need to give preference to waste prevention over re-use, followed by recycling, recovery of energy embedded in waste, and with disposal as the last resort.

11. Sustainable waste management is possible also by improving the overall environmental performance of products throughout their life-cycle, and continuing to address unsustainable patterns of consumption and production.
12. Various regional and international initiatives in the field of chemicals, including SAICM, constitute an important step in building the connections that will lead to the achievement of the objective of sound chemicals management by 2020.
13. Sound chemical management has to be based on a precautionary approach taking into account the life-cycle of chemicals, it should rely on an expanded knowledge base on the hazardous properties of chemicals, it should build the capacity for risk assessment and risk management and promote the substitution of dangerous chemicals with less hazardous alternatives.

Distinguished co-chairs,

14. The challenges and objectives we are addressing are ambitious and we believe that the SDGs will provide the time and momentum to sum up all our efforts and deliver on this promise. In particular on SCP, the adoption of the 10 Year Framework of Programmes (10YFP) in Rio De Janeiro was a first step to scale up practical action. Our commitment to implement the 10YFP will prove whether we wish to rise to this challenge or not.
15. Allow me to close our statement by making a final consideration on time. It is the only thing we cannot recycle. Let us act now and design the transformational changes needed. Let us not deal only with the symptoms and address the politically less challenging issues. Let us reach higher, beyond the low hanging fruits. Let us allow that everyone, everywhere has enough. Let us always ensure that no one is left behind.