

Thematic discussions

Sustainable Production and Consumption

Friday 7 May, 2010

Viewpoint of the Scientific & Technological Communities on Mining

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving the floor to the Scientific & Technological Community

Science, engineering and technology will be critically important for moving to sustainable consumption and production patterns. Our comments today are focused on specific aspects of sustainable production systems and also aspects of sustainable waste management.

Enhancing energy conservation and efficiency, sustainable industrial and chemical production, sustainable buildings and construction, sustainable physical infrastructure are key areas for decoupling economic growth from environmental impact. For moving in this direction, it will be important to disseminate among all production and consumption sectors two main concepts: 1. knowledge of product life cycle, and 2. true cost of a product that includes the recycling costs.

The Scientific and Technological Communities recognize the importance of recycling and the potential of recycled materials to supplement the flow of primary materials to production processes. We wish to comment on the importance of life cycle assessments of the consumption cycle, and specifically recycling processes. It is essential to develop data and information on the energy and material inputs and outputs associated with the recycling of various products, as well as the social and environmental impacts of recycling activities. If data and information are lacking it is often not possible to identify those instances where recycled materials are more sustainable than those supplied from primary sources.

The engineering of recycling is far from complete. Continuing scientific and engineering advancements are needed to ensure that recycling of the full range of materials, including advanced composites, will be possible, which is not the case today.

We wish to express our support for the UNIDO-UNEP Cleaner Production Initiatives and note the importance of National Cleaner Production Centres in facilitating the transfer of engineering advancements to, and the implementation of cleaner technologies and industries in developing and transition countries. This successful capacity building program deserves the support of Member Nations and Major Groups.

In conclusion, the Scientific and Technological Community fully supports the development of A 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production. All domains of science, engineering and technology are committed to contribute to this important initiative. The contribution of the social and economic sciences will also be important in this respect.

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

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