
Latin America and the Caribbean:
Overview of the Regional Implementation Meeting
held in Antigua, Guatemala, November 26-27, 2009

Joseluis Samaniego

Director, Sustainable Development and Human Settlements Division, ECLAC

Regional Discussion Session, CSD-18, May 3, 2010



UNITED NATIONS



Sustainable Consumption and Production

Priority under the Latin American and Caribbean Initiative for Sustainable Development

- Active Regional Council of Government Experts
- Subregional, national initiatives.

But concrete results are still scarce

- Few measures so far with significant and measurable effects
- Inequalities:
 - In income: basic needs vs. overconsumption
 - Heterogenous industrial base (SMEs vs. large firms)
- Limited consumer awareness; limited producer responsibility/unsustainable business models

Regional priority areas have been proposed by the Regional Council of Government Experts

- national policies and strategies for sustainable consumption and production;
- support for SMEs;
- sustainable public procurement;
- sustainable lifestyles;
- development of an information and knowledge management network.

Also

- Involvement of multiple stakeholders
 - State capacity must be strengthened.
 - Need to recover traditional values and lifestyles
-

Mining

Regulation has been strengthened and some companies have been proactive

- Regulatory and contractual regimes on mining standards, domestic revenues, environmental issues.
- Some companies have adopted environmental practices in advance of national regulations and improved relations with communities.

Cost-benefit equation has often been unfavourable for affected communities and the environment

- Weak public management capacities make it difficult to ensure that mining profits are effectively invested, and that mining activities are undertaken sustainably
- Uneven bargaining power
- Companies have not always complied with commitments
- Mine closure, environmental liabilities/remediation of contaminated sites still a challenge.
- High rate of informal and illegal activity; poor labour conditions, mining in environmentally sensitive areas; mercury contamination.

Need to strengthen institutional capacity and assess cost-benefit, involving communities

- Strengthen capacities of national, subnational and municipal Governments.
- A regional position on mining establishing standards and requiring commitment to local development rather than marginal contributions to social programmes
- Promote integrated, environmental management practices
- Strategic environmental assessments and stronger zoning/ land-use policies
- Strengthen institutional mechanisms to engage multiple stakeholders

Transportation

BRT, biofuels, cleaner fuels, safety

- Reforms in urban public transportation in some major cities (BRT)
- The region has been a leader in the production and use of alternative fuels, with particularly successful experiences in sugar-cane based ethanol
- Leaded gasoline has been eliminated
- There have been improvements in road safety

Institutional structures still not conducive to integrated decision-making:

- Environmental and social aspects are often not incorporated into transportation policies
- policies on different modes of transportation are frequently separate and uncoordinated
- Urban expansion has followed the North American, carbon-intensive model

The stick, the carrot, and integration

- Standards and economic instruments to ensure fuel-efficiency
 - Must be accompanied by effective alternative transportation modes
 - Co-modality, non-motorized modes
 - Institutional mechanisms to ensure joint consideration of environmental, social and economic aspects in infrastructure and services
-

Chemicals

Advances in regulation and in management/banning of specific products

- Success in banning of pesticides, reduction of ozone depleting substances, lead in gasoline
- High rate of ratification of international instruments
- Regional efforts in the implementation of SAICM

Lags between regulation/international commitments, and implementation.

- Countries still need to invest in enforcing bans, managing stockpiles of obsolete pesticides and regulating and monitoring pesticide residues in food products. Some parts of the region where persistent toxic substances were produced in the past have critical levels of contamination and the implications for human health in these areas are not yet clear.
- Management of hazardous wastes and levels of accident preparedness are generally inadequate.
- Under international conventions, reporting rates and implementation plans are low
- Bottlenecks in administrative capacity, information, infrastructure, trained professionals, financial resources, mainstreaming and secondary importance within policy agendas

Needs greater attention even in public agenda (even in environmental agenda)

- Mainstreaming of sound chemicals management into national sustainable development plans and programmes;
 - Increase financing; cooperation;
 - Strengthening of State action and regulation, while involving companies. Support for SMEs.
-

Waste

Advances, but still piecemeal

- Advances in waste collection, disposal in sanitary landfills, recycling, methane recovery, industrial wastes.
- High levels of recycling in some industries (steel, paper)
- Exchange systems established
- Illegal transboundary shipments of hazardous wastes have been dismantled, in line with Basel Convention

Situation of waste still reflects inequalities and advance is hindered by institutional limitations

- Local vs. national responsibilities; difficulties in financing
- Illegal transboundary movements of hazardous wastes are known to occur
- Waste collection still deficient in low income areas
- Recycling has advanced little in other industries
- People living off dumps in unacceptable social conditions
- Experience with private sector has been mixed due to poor regulatory design

Regulation, public and public-private partnerships, awareness

- Institutional cooperation/taking advantage of economies of scale
- Involvement of private sector in collection and disposal services, with proper regulation
- Training, education, awareness raising
- Involve producers through life-cycle approach, extend producer responsibility to waste disposal stage