

TRENDS IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



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Department of Economic and Social Affairs
Division for Sustainable Development

TRENDS

IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Towards Sustainable Consumption and Production



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DESA

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FOREWORD

The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation refers to sustainable consumption and production (SCP), along with poverty eradication and conservation of the natural resource base, as essential precondition for sustainable development. The idea of sustainable development contains within it the completion of three transitions: demographic, development, and decoupling. The demographic transition is at a mature stage and global population will level off around 9 billion later this century, and the share of urban population will expand briskly, especially in developing countries.

The development transition is far from complete. It refers to the time when the gains from development would reach all countries, and the consequent prosperity would be shared broadly. Currently, while the 15 per cent of the world's population that lives in developed countries has an average per capita income above \$40,000, the 80 per cent in developing countries average income of less than \$2,000 per capita. This is also reflected in the wide dispersion of human development indicators as well as per capita energy consumption.

The decoupling transition is also problematic. Already, the consumption patterns of the developed countries have imposed severe stresses on the earth's natural resources and largely filled its natural sinks. If the development transition were to follow the same consumption and production patterns, pressures on critical ecosystems and life-support systems would become intolerable. Thus, a key challenge facing the international community is how to sustain and even accelerate the development transition while also realizing the decoupling transition. An energy transition is also crucial, combining energy access for the poor with diffusion of renewable energy.

In short, we must find pathways which simultaneously achieve upward convergence of living standards (completing the development transition) and downward convergence of resource use and environmental impacts (the decoupling transition).

This volume reviews progress towards achieving these interlinked challenges, focusing first on broad trends in resource use, then turning to drivers of resource depletion and environmental degradation, and finally examining the major initiatives of governments, business and civil society to shift towards sustainable consumption and production patterns.





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