

Check against Delivery

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Business/Industry Major Group Statement: Sustainable Consumption and Production
May 7, 2010

Thank you Mr. Chair.

As several speakers have observed in the past week, business is intrinsic to many of the issues before the CSD in this bi-ennium, and perhaps none more so than SCP. Businesses of all sizes and sectors all over the world are both producers and consumers, and have been engaged for some time in 1) offering more sustainable products and services to our customers, 2) operating in a less environmentally impactful manner, and 3) managing our supply chains accordingly.

We have been supportively engaged in SCP related efforts through UNEP, the Marrakesh process, and in CSD meetings since its inception. We have emphasized SCP as a priority consideration in partnerships and voluntary initiatives. We understand that SCP is the axis around which international efforts to green economies will revolve. We believe SCP is highly relevant to all major groups, and to countries, whether developed or developing.

Throughout, the business/industry major group has encouraged CSD, and a host of other inter-governmental forums and international cooperative initiatives to adopt a lifecycle approach, from resource extraction to marketing to use/recycling/disposal and reuse, to SCP to drive policies and measures that will empower the market to embrace SCP practices.

One example of a contribution: In January, ICC produced a new global Framework for Responsible Environmental Marketing Communications in response to a call from stakeholders for guidance on how to better engage in and evaluate environmental marketing communications to ensure that consumer confidence in such claims is safeguarded.

In developing its guidance, ICC responded to the absence of internationally agreed-upon definitions of certain claims, and focussed on core advertising principles and tools to help advertisers assure that environmental claims are truthful, supported by science, appropriately qualified, and clear.

A significant part of the greening economy challenge is empowering the market to work for sustainability by focusing policies, programs and measures towards enabling the relevant lifecycle stages in the provision of products and services that advance sustainable consumption and production, namely R&D, eco-efficient manufacturing, green marketing, eco-aware consumption, responsible end of life management, etc..

In our view, there is no fundamental disconnect between sustainability and a market based economy. With an enabling framework in place, producers and consumers can and will both benefit from an economy that fosters eco-efficient production and eco-aware consumption. We must recognize that with economic development, many societies will see increasing consumption, so the challenge of SCP is not so much about consuming less, but rather consuming better and improving quality of life for all. We should be pursuing economies that are progressively delinked from an unsustainable impact on the earth as technology, production methods and consumer demand evolves.

Diversity, flexibility and adaptability are important watchwords in this regard. SCP needs to remain a dynamic concept, adaptable to different consumption patterns driven by cultural, social and regional considerations (e.g, local availability of natural and human resources). In this regard industry supports a vision of SCP that is long term, dynamic, and allows for regional differentiation.

Government policy plays a critical enabling role, for many attributes of SCP. A case in point is innovation, which should be encouraged but not mandated. Similarly procurement policies, consumer information programs, and regulatory regimes should provide operational clarity, remove unwarranted market rigidities, and in some cases facilitate market introduction of new products, but avoid prescribing products, technologies, or production methods, or generally restrict choice, which as a general rule is better left to the market to allocate.

We see a supportive role for governments to encourage the lead markets that are needed to enable sustainable innovations to become commercially viable. We need the right balanced ecosystem of regulations, supplemented by voluntary initiatives and partnerships, where the governments work with industry and stakeholders to shape the markets that foster sustainable production and enable smarter consumption. We see a key role for industry in advancing eco-efficient production and standard development, consumers need to drive the demand for environmentally preferred products, and workers need to have the capacity to move to the jobs created by a more eco-efficient economy.