

On the Road to Belgrade EfE 2007: Making Sustainable Production and Consumption an Overarching Objective for Europe

NGO Position and Recommendations

INTRODUCTION

1. At the 1992 Earth Summit, world leaders agreed that unsustainable production and consumption patterns, especially those in the industrialized countries, are the major cause of environmental degradation. Ten years later, at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), world leaders identified sustainable production and consumption as one of the essential and overarching objectives of sustainable development. To achieve this objective, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation called for a ten-year framework of programmes supporting sustainable production and consumption activities at the local, national and global levels. aimed at achieving this objective. One of the most important challenges facing the Environment for Europe process is for the region to implement this commitment for the ECE region. We need to come from rhetoric to action.

2. Given the deadline of 2010 in the Commission of Sustainable Development to review international progress in developing this 10-year framework, it is time now for the ECE to implement this important WSSD commitment. The 2007 Environment for Europe meeting in Belgrade should celebrate the launch of the regional process to develop a **Pan-European framework** to support state and local programmes and initiatives aimed at achieving sustainable production and consumption in these countries and in their transactions with other regions of the world.

3. Sustainable production and consumption is essential to achieving sustainability in the UNECE region which includes highly industrialised and developed countries of the world as well as economies in transition. Ministers in Kiev-2003¹ underlined the importance of the shift towards sustainable production and consumption patterns and encouraged regions, sub regions and countries to devise, as appropriate, programmes to accelerate this shift.² However, this needs to become not just another activity but an overarching objective for the region.

4. NGOs of the UNECE region welcome recognition of sustainable production and consumption as one of the key issues on the agenda of the 6th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe” (EfE) to be held in Belgrade, Serbia, October 2007. This recognition strengthens our confidence that NGO recommendations (e.g. ECO-Forum Statement in Kiev-2003, Ostend NGO Statement, 2004) are taken into account and encourages us to further contribute to the process. We also refer to the recent Regional

¹ 5th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, Kiev, Ukraine, 21-23 May 2003

² Ministerial Declaration of the 5th Ministerial Conference “Environment for Europe”, Kiev, Ukraine, 23 May 2003

(SEE) Declaration on Environmental Cohesion of South-Eastern Europe as the tool for Sustainable Development (Belgrade 2006). We stress the importance of linking this issue in the EfE framework with the Marrakech Process as well as the CSD cycle 2010/11 and Rio+20, helping ensure an effective ten-year framework on sustainable production and production can be adopted by heads of the states in 2012.

5. We welcome the initiative of Sweden, UNEP and EEA to elaborate reviews of production and consumption patterns in EECCA and SEE countries and express our willingness to be actively and substantially involved as equal partners working and implementing projects at local level. We also express our readiness to actively participate in the development of a strategic paper on production and consumption for the Belgrade 2007 EfE conference. Below we present some of our main positions and recommendations.

A PAN-EUROPEAN REGIONAL FRAMEWORK ON SUSTAINABLE PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION

6. We call upon the governments to

(1) agree to develop a **pan-European regional framework and strategy to achieve sustainable production and consumption**, in the framework of "Environment for Europe"

(2) to adopt this framework and strategy at the next EfE Ministerial conference in 2011

(3) ensure immediate implementation, including clear commitments for prioritizing and resourcing this work .

7. Such an approach will bring long-term social, environmental and economic benefits to our region. It will also provide a necessary space for developing countries and help build the trust with developing countries needed to agree on commitments at the global level.

8. The process for developing and implementing this Pan-European strategy should actively **involve civil society** and other stakeholders.

9. The strategy should **support regional, national and local programmes** and initiatives aimed at achieving sustainable production and consumption. Governments need to encourage and support action at the local level, **strengthening sustainable local production efforts and consumption practices**. Municipal governments need to be encouraged and assisted in their contribution to implementation and in working with local communities and NGOs to this end.

10. The strategy should especially **encourage cooperation and exchange between and among Eastern and Western parts of the region**. Since the first efforts are already made within the European Union to move forward in transition to sustainable production and consumption (e.g. targets for renewables, REACH³, the thematic strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources), we ask EU countries to support other governments and invite them to participate in this work. To achieve tangible results on in achieving sustainable production and consumption in the whole UNECE region additional support on capacity building, project design and implementation in SEE and EECCA countries is needed. Transfer of environmentally sound technologies as well as prevention of further exports of obsolete technologies is especially needed within the region. In this regard we call upon donors to allocate intellectual and

³ REACH - Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation of Chemicals. An effective REACH can drastically reduce the impacts of hazardous chemicals on public health and the environment. REACH can also give a boost to innovation in this sector. We suggest to discuss in Belgrade whether REACH can be extended to the pan-European region. Building a regional policy on chemicals may become one of the attractive outcomes of the Belgrade Conference.

financial resources for work in these sub-regions, and to encourage and support active cooperation among SEE and EECCA countries

11. The process should also include a **Transatlantic Dialogue on Sustainable Production and Consumption** to encourage an exchange of information and cooperation between European and North American stakeholders within the ECE region.

CONTENT

12. Improving the quality of life of all people in the region and beyond should be the overall goal for the Pan-European Strategy on Sustainable Production and Consumption. This strategy should contribute to eradicating poverty in the region, respecting people's right for access to resources to fulfil their basic needs, and to protecting the region's ecosystems.

13. We remind governments of their earlier commitment to the Precautionary Principle made in Rio-1992 at UNCED and adopted in the set of Rio Principles. This principle must be systematically applied to decisions with a potential negative impact on the environment

14. The systematic integration of social, economic and environmental considerations into sectoral policies is a backbone for an effective sustainable production and consumption strategy. Key elements within that are:

Ecological fiscal reform containing

- (i) removal of environmentally harmful and other perverse subsidies;⁴
- (ii) use of eco-taxes to internalise external costs;
- (iii) broader use of price mechanisms that support policy integration;
- (iv) selective use of positive incentives;
- (v) development of new and common measures of accounting including environmental impacts within the current system of accounts.

*Clean and eco-effective production*⁵ supported by

- (i) green investment;
- (ii) eco-innovation;
- (iii) eco – design;
- (iv) ambitious and regularly updated product standards and labelling programmes;
- (v) increasing market access for environmental goods and services;
- (vi) environmentally sound public procurement rules and practices;
- (vii) environment management systems and standards⁶.

Education for sustainable production and consumption via

⁴ An **IMPACT ASSESSMENT of all subsidies affecting production and consumption patterns**, is urgently needed, followed by concrete action **to phase out destructive subsidies** at national and supranational levels.[0]

⁵ This should be ensured at both national and local levels, with companies required to implement clean production and other environment policies both in the Western and Eastern parts of the ECE region.

⁶ Such as ISO 14000.

- (i) integrating knowledge of relevant consumption behaviour into curricula from pre-school to universities and in the concepts of life long learning;
- (ii) providing data for reliable information, awareness and decision making;
- (iii) report on indicators to shape consumption behaviour that can make a difference.

Corporate responsibility and accountability, including

- (i) by creating full transparency about the sustainability performance of business;
- (ii) dialogue between enterprises and the communities in which they operate;
- (iii) financial institutions to incorporate sustainable development considerations into their decision-making processes;
- (iv) workplace-based partnerships and programmes
- (v) review and regulation of advertising in order to prevent unsubstantiated and/or misleading environmental claims.

Information and public participation for sustainable production and consumption including

- (i) adoption of strong community Right to Know policies and laws;
- (ii) involvement of stakeholders into consultative bodies within decision making process;
- (iii) support and financing of participation structures;
- (iv) develop and provide effective transparent and verifiable consumer information tools relating to sustainable production and consumption;
- (v) information to all levels of society and authorities on how environmental factors are influencing economical and social development

15. All these elements should be carefully taken into account for a coherent strategy to ensure they support and complement each other.

16. Specific objectives, with targets and timetables, should be formulated for **sectoral policies**, where the primary attention should be given to **transport, energy, food and agriculture, while other sectors should also not be excluded**. Special attention should also be given to climate change/ greenhouse gases and hazardous substances as most important thematically issues. The overall objective should be to stay within the regional and global carrying capacity of our eco-systems, which means for the UNECE region a dramatic reduction of the use of natural resources.

MONITORING

17. To achieve the overarching objective of sustainable production and consumption an effective, regular and comparative **monitoring** system for measuring and evaluating progress is essential.

18. We call upon member states of the UNECE Committee on Environmental Policy to identify a core set of UNECE region-wide **indicators** to monitor progress towards sustainable production and consumption in all countries of the region. The work on indicators should bring together and build upon EEA, UNEP, civil society and other activities, materials and work on relevant data and indicators. We urge production of **comparable country data** measuring progress towards **clear sustainable production and consumption targets**. These should be published widely and **enable comparisons** between different countries and regions. These indicators should measure progress in **decoupling** the impacts of each country's ecological footprint from their economic development. They should provide information, such

as “per capita use of non-renewables,” national and regional ecological footprints, and more appropriate alternatives to GNP such as the **Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare (ISEW)** and **Genuine Progress Indicator (GPI)**. **Benchmarks and timetables** for action to phase out unsustainable production and consumption patterns should be developed and agreed by governments with full participation of NGOs.

INSPIRING NATIONAL EFFORTS

19. Regional strategies are built on agreements among independent countries. While some countries have taken the initiative to raise sustainable production and consumption on the Belgrade agenda, the EfE conference and process need to inspire all countries to develop similar national strategies. Every nation has different priorities within this work and it is essential that local cultural issues are acknowledged. Tangible political commitment is needed on all levels, i.e. laws, rules and regulations must be harmonised with the concept of sustainable consumption and production. Financial resources must be allocated for the implementation of these concepts.

20. We therefore call upon national governments to develop adopt and implement without any delay **domestic policy frameworks** that will encourage a shift to more sustainable patterns of production and consumption, as agreed to in Agenda 21, and **National Action Plans on Sustainable Production and Consumption**, as called for in the Marrakech Process. These, combined with national environmental protection and poverty-eradication plans, provide the missing element essential to sustainable development. Such National Action Plans should express the ethical dimension, promoting socially responsible attitudes, fair share and wellbeing for all.⁷

21. As expected at the regional level, such policy frameworks and plans should be developed, implemented and monitored in a clear and transparent way allowing full public engagement, with NGO participation at all stages of the process. National Action Plans should feature clear objectives, goals and targets, with meaningful timelines and resource allocation commitments.

ORGANIZING THE PROCESS

22. To ensure substantive progress towards a UNECE Sustainable Production and Consumption Strategy we call for establishment of an open-ended **Task Force on Sustainable Production and Consumption** under the umbrella of the UNECE CEP. It should include national government representatives along with appropriate civil society and other stakeholders. Participants should be mandated to work and report on concrete regional strategy development and serve as focal points in the national contexts.

NGO CONTRIBUTION

23. Being voluntary and dedicated organizations of active and concerned citizens committed to the public interest, NGOs play a significant role in promoting sustainability to people in their daily life, as consumers and producers, as well as communicating citizen ideas, proposals and concerns to decision makers, translating decisions made at different levels to ordinary people. NGOs also have a responsibility to the public by acting as watchdogs on government and industry, to ensure they truly serve and are accountable to society and not simply some private interests. We call upon Governments to fully

⁷ We welcome the work achievements of the UNECE member states in developing and implementation of UNECE Strategy on Education for Sustainable Development and UNDESD, and reiterate the need to support (both, by resource allocation and prioritizing at national levels) **education, awareness campaigns on sustainable production and consumption** for all from children to adults, specialists, decision makers and elder generation. [0]

recognize and support NGOs as key partners in designing strategic approaches to defining and achieving the sustainable production and consumption objective at all levels.

24. We would like to thank those governments that have supported NGO work on sustainable production and consumption in the past and call upon all governments to support NGOs in our future work toward a common goal.

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